# Left Over

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/35597200.

**Rating:**
Not Rated

**Archive Warning:**
No Archive Warnings Apply

**Category:**
Gen

**Fandoms:**
僕のヒーローアカデミア | Boku no Hero Academia | My Hero Academia, 僕のヒーローアカデミア | Boku no Hero Academia | My Hero Academia (Anime & Manga)

**Relationships:**
Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead/Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead & Midoriya Izuku, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead & Midoriya Izuku & Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic

**Characters:**
Midoriya Izuku, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Midoriya Inko, Yagi Toshinori | All Might

**Additional Tags:**
Hurt/Comfort, Mental Health Issues, Self-Esteem Issues, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Midoriya Izuku Has Self-Esteem Issues, Parental Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Parental Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Parental Yagi Toshinori | All Might, Midoriya Inko's Bad Parenting, Starvation, Child Abandonment, Neglectful Midoriya Inko, Midoriya Izuku Needs A Hug, Hurt Midoriya Izuku, Hunger-fic, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead and Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic Adopt Midoriya Izuku

**Language:**
English

**Collections:**
thewanderingcat's favorite My Hero Academia fics, Bnha fics I don't want to loose, 📚 Fanfic Forum Discord Recs, Favorite BNHA Fics ❤, My Hero Academia Fics To Cleanse Your Soul ♨, Present Mic is the best and I'm gonna YELL about it, ☆My Hero Stories Worth

Your Time☆, Best Adoption Fics, 10/10 would re-read bnha, Days' best bnha finds , Keep up with these gems, MHA FICS, The Foxy List, Dadzawa Vibes, Still Waiting, T.S.S (This shit slaps), Good Books To Read A Concerning Number of Times, MHA dadzawa or dadmic and their zero-regrets family , finished shit that was REALLY FUCKING GOOD, Accidentally being dads (BNHA), fics that give me life, Seekers All Time Great Fics, BNHA Must Read Again, Lux's fav fics, Bnha fanfic who has my heart, Aizawa Adopts Izuku, My daily dose of serotonin, Favorite BNHA Works ⚡, Awakeat3chaos, BNHA Favourites!!!, zawa, Well written BNHA comfort fics, Kaylee's favorite fics, First Bound Book, fav completed fics, Parentless_Behavior, if you wanna cry, Alternative Universes of Fandoms I enjoy., Finished Favs

**Stats:**

Published: 2021-12-09 Completed: 2023-03-13 Words: 148,792 Chapters: 38/38

# Left Over

by Dinosawrhat

Summary

Aizawa Shouta's instincts were nearly 100% accurate, as was his eye for small details. They were skills honed through years working the Underground, and only broadened when it came to dealing with 20 incredibly powerful teens year after year. So, when he noticed that Midoriya hadn't brought a lunch for the fourth time this week, he knew something was off.

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The story is complete along with an epilogue and a whole slew of shorts!

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I do not grant permission to translate my work or turn it into podfics.

# Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Aizawa Shouta's instincts were nearly 100% accurate, as was his eye for small details. They were skills honed through years working the Underground, and only broadened when it came to dealing with 20 incredibly powerful teens year after year. He could tell something was up with Midoriya since the class returned from their internships and pegged it as shock from the rather eventful fight with Stain, the Hero Killer. After a few weeks, however, it was clear something more was going on. Mentions of the villain no longer caused reactions in the boy, but his odd behavior continued. His training started to plateau instead of increasing along with his classmates; he wore his school jacket every day, despite the heat of the summer; and, strangely, Midoriya failed to bring his lunch to school multiple days in a row.

The first time he noticed Midoriya without lunch was Monday, two weeks before final exams, when Uraraka gave him the apple out of her bento. The next day, Midoriya claimed he got so busy with homework the night before that he forgot to make one. The third time, Aizawa almost didn't notice except that the majority of the class were showing off stickers on their bentos, and called out to Midoriya to show off as he was quietly slipping out the door. He said he left it at home. So, when Aizawa saw that Midoriya didn't bring lunch for the fourth time this week, he resolved to get to the bottom of it.

As Class 1-A packed their things in preparation for lunch, Aizawa eyed the green-haired teen who made no move to walk to the lunch room with his friends. Midoriya concentrated deeply on the notebook he carried with him everywhere. Aizawa noted this one appeared to be newer and a different style than his typical notebooks. The class filed out quickly, everyone chatting with each other in excitement.

"Deku! Did you forget your lunch *again*?" Uraraka bounced over to his desk, her eyes sparkling with humor and a large degree of concern. Her expression was light and friendly, but deep worry lines creased on her forehead.

Midoriya jumped slightly at her approach, wide green eyes staring up at his friend as he pulled himself out of whatever deep thought was on his mind. "Wha…? Oh!" He immediately looked down sheepishly at

his desk. “I m-must have l-left it on the counter this m-morning.” He chuckled. Aizawa noticed the teen biting his lip hard and stuttering badly as he spoke. He stored the thought away for later.

Uraraka frowned, looking down at her own small bento, then back at her friend as she shuffled her feet. “Do you…do you want to share mine? You’re getting really skinny!”

Hands immediately started waving frantically as Midoriya nearly yelled, “Oh no! P-please d-don’t worry about it. You g-go enjoy your lunch! Heh…” He smiled brightly at the girl, telling her he would meet them at their table when he was finished with his notes.

Still unsure and with a worried crease between her brows, Uraraka managed a small smile back and nodded. “Alright, Deku! But you better come sit with us! I’m not sure I can handle another day of Iida lecturing me on proper nutrition.”

She winked at Midoriya laughingly as Iida burst out in full lecture mode by the door, “A hero should always be getting the proper nutrients to ensure they are at their top form in the field! Why, when my brother…” Midoriya’s friends trailed out the door as Iida continued, Uraraka rolling her eyes and waving at Deku as she left the classroom, that worried smile still across her face.

Midoriya continued smiling at them and waving cheerily until they were out of sight, then the smile vanished and he hunched back over his desk, bringing his hand down to clutch at his stomach. A cloud seemed to cover the brightness in his eyes as a loud growl sounded through the empty room.

Aizawa frowned. This kind of behavior was unlike the teen, whom many of his coworkers called the “Sunshine Boy.” Lying to his friends and avoiding their company? Very odd. Standing and removing himself from the garish yellow bag, he called out “Midoriya.” The freckled teen, who returned to whatever was taking his attention in his notebook after Uraraka left, jumped hard enough to bang his knee into the underside of his desk. Bright green eyes stared wide at Aizawa, shock and embarrassment filling them as he realized he forgot his teacher was still there.

“Um...y-yes, sir?”

The underground hero motioned with a finger for the kid to come stand in front of him. Once Midoriya stood at the front of the class, Aizawa pulled a small notepad and pen from one of the many pockets

in his hero costume. He scratched the pen across the pad rapidly as he spoke, “I can’t have you passing out in training. Give this to Lunch Rush. He’ll get you something to eat.” He ripped the sheet off and held it out to his student.

Midoriya looked down at the note, eyes wide and hand slightly trembling. “I-I’ll be fine, sensei,” he stuttered. He tried to hand the note back, but the tired hero’s hands were shoved deep into his pockets and showed no sign of moving. “I j-just forgot my lunch is all. It’s f-fine, really.”

Aizawa stared at him with tired eyes, unimpressed, but said nothing, simply tilting his head sideways to nod at the door.

Midoriya gulped, pulling his hand back and staring down at his red boots. After a moment of silence he mumbled, “Um…Th-thank you, Aizawa-sensei.”

“Don’t mention it, kid.” Aizawa watched as the green-haired student gathered his things. He noted that everything was tossed haphazardly into his yellow All-Might backpack with the exception of the notebook, which was carefully slid into a separate pocket.

As Midoriya slumped past his teacher to the door, Aizawa called out, “And Midoriya.” The teen turned his curly head to glance nervously back at him, hands gripping the straps on his backpack and shoulders tense. The pro hero felt a lump form in his stomach as he took in Midoriya’s stiff and nervous posture, so he softened his gaze slightly. “If your lunch gets *forgotten* again,” he emphasized the word slightly, seeing Midoriya gulp and widen his eyes slightly, “let me know, and I’ll get you another note.”

The teen’s mouth dropped into a slight ‘o’ shape before he came to his senses and bowed slightly to his homeroom teacher and tripped out the door in the direction of the cafeteria.

Aizawa watched him go, eyes narrowing slightly as he felt an instinctual twinge that something wasn’t quite right. The pro hero slipped back into his sleeping back and pulled a jelly pouch out of the hidden snack pocket inside the warm cocoon, making a mental note to keep an eye on Midoriya Izuku.

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Izuku never felt so dumbfounded in his life. Not even when All Might told him to eat a strand of the man’s hair in the middle of Dagobah

Beach.

*Was Aizawa-sensei just…nice to me?* Izuku stumbled through the busy hallways, clutching the note like a lifeline. It wasn't anything spectacular or impressive really.

*'Get Midoriya the Hero Special. He needs the calories. -Eraserhead'*

That's all it said. *The Hero Special?* He thought. *Is that some kind of secret menu item for Lunch Rush? Or maybe it's what he makes for the teachers? Oh no. Am I not supposed to have this? But why would Aizawa-sensei give me this note if it's for the teachers only and I'm a student and of course I shouldn't give this to Lunch Rush he's going to look at me like I'm crazy or think I wrote it myself as a joke and…*

Izuku continued this train of thought, unaware that he was mumbling out loud and somehow made it to the front of the lunch line without bumping into someone.

"Shouldn't give me what?"

Izuku flailed slightly, letting out an embarrassing yell as he startled at the sudden question from Lunch Rush himself. "Ah! I'm s-sorry mister Lunch Rush, sir! I-I was just uh," Midoriya paused as his eyes danced over the white glove held out for the note in his hand. He glanced between the glove and his note before comprehension dawned on him. "Oh! Uh, Aizawa-sensei t-told me to g-give you this," he mumbled quietly, handing the note over to the UA chef and hoping he didn't just made a complete and *total* fool of himself.

Lunch Rush glanced over the note, reading it quickly and, seeming to understand what Eraserhead wanted, he flashed a quick thumbs up to Midoriya before throwing together a plate with plenty of rice, pork, and vegetables, all smothered in a delectable smelling sauce. Izuku's mouth watered, his stomach gurgling loudly at the sight of the first full meal in three days.

Lunch Rush placed a plate in front of Izuku on a tray with a small bottle of apple juice, a receipt taped to the bottle. "Order up!" He called, already turning to the next student in line. Thanking the pro hero chef again, Izuku hastily took the tray and made his way over to his regular table where Uraraka and Iida sat across from Jirou and Yaoyarozu.

"Deku! You made it!" Uraraka glanced down at his tray in surprise. "You got lunch? But you never buy lunch?"

Izuku let out a nervous chuckle as he hastily pulled the receipt off his drink and shoved it into a pocket, ignoring the line reading 'Total 0.00'. "I uh…found a c-couple hundred y-yen in my b-backpack that I forgot about." He smiled brightly at his friend, inwardly thinking *Don't question it don't question it don't—*

"Well, that was lucky! I'm glad you didn't have to go hungry." Uraraka shifted to the side to make room for Izuku to place his tray down, a bright smile on her round face. The deep lines between her eyebrows smoothed over as she brought him into the conversation. "Momo was just trying to explain Yamada-sensei's English assignment. I'm so lost!"

Izuku relaxed slowly as the conversation steered away from topics he didn't want to speak about. He relaxed as his friends continued talking and he enjoyed his lunch. He tried not to feel guilty about the food he didn't pay for. He quickly estimated the cost in his head and made a mental note to add it into his budget after lunch. He would pay Aizawa back for his kindness, at the very least.

As the conversation continued and lunch was nearing its end, Izuku felt a wave of nausea roil in his stomach. He frowned, swallowing more of his juice to soothe his stomach. A sharp pain lanced through his gut and he stood quickly. His four classmates all turned to watch him leave with surprise.

"Deku!" Uraraka called after him. "Where are you going?"

Izuku dumped his lunch into the garbage can and left the tray in a receptacle. He tried to smile, but a tremble in his chin and lurch in his gut sent him racing to the bathroom with a hand over his mouth. He only just made it in time to collapse against the porcelain as his stomach emptied itself into the toilet, a cold sweat across the back of his neck as his diaphragm spasmed with the force of his retching.

The door to the bathroom opened and Izuku heard two sets of footsteps click against the tile floor. He hastily shut the stall door, then returned to his position above the toilet bowl, his stomach twisting like a ball of worms.

One of the two boys spoke, "Man, did you understand that assignment for Ectoplasm's class? I got like three of the questions right."

"Really? I thought it was easy. Didn't you pay attention during class on Friday? He went over how to do the whole thing."

The first speaker cursed, “I fell asleep in class. Must’ve missed it.”

The second boy laughed at his friend. “You idiot! Next time go to bed before midnight!”

The two dried their hands and quickly left the room. Izuku sighed as their footsteps disappeared, his head heavy as it dropped against his arm. He felt awful. Only the prospect of hero training and the knowledge that Aizawa would never let him walk home without his parents to pick him up kept him from asking to go home. Izuku breathed heavily, willing his upset stomach to calm down. This was the third time he vomited this week. He hoped he didn’t have a stomach bug. A hospital visit right now would be too much for his already strained budget.

Izuku groaned as he heard the warning bell and blew his nose with toilet paper, then flushed the remains of his delicious lunch down into the plumbing. He stood on shaky legs, hobbling over to the sinks to rinse his mouth out. His green eyes caught sight of his pale face in the mirror. Wincing at his clammy skin and the dark circles under his eyes, Izuku splashed water over his face, scrubbing the skin to get some color back. He braced his arms over the sink and watched as his muscles shook heavily. *I’ll go light on my training today*, he thought as he pushed himself slowly upright and strode to the exit. *No need to be completely useless.*

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Aizawa watched as his students filed back into the classroom and took their seats. He noticed Uraraka standing by Iida’s desk, looking worried. Both students were speaking in hushed voices and kept glancing at the classroom door. Midoriya wasn’t with them. Glancing around the room, he didn’t find Midoriya in his usual seat behind Bakugo either.

He waited. The final bell rang and the class went silent. Several sets of eyes glanced at the empty spot where Midoriya should be. “Where’s Midoriya?” He called. His expression was neutral but no small amount of concern hid behind his words. Though he often called Midoriya ‘Problem Child’ in his own mind, the kid was anything but. Punctual, attentive in class, never missed a homework assignment, the teen practically oozed responsibility, even if he was less than cautious with his own safety. Midoriya took schooling very seriously, something Aizawa appreciated about the superpowered brat.

Uraraka glanced at Iida, who appeared to be struggling internally. She raised her hand, face earnest and worried. “Sir?” She called, continuing when Aizawa nodded at her. “I think Deku had to throw up. He was looking really green at the end of lunch.”

Aizawa lifted an eyebrow and started to speak, but was interrupted as the teen in question hurried into the room and bowed deeply. “I-I’m sorry I’m l-late Aizawa-sensei!”

The pro hero’s dark eyes examined his student, noticing the pale and clammy skin, as well as the slight shake in the boy’s limbs. Midoriya’s bottom lip was firmly between his teeth, and his right hand was tightly scrunching up his uniform pants. Nervousness, embarrassment, and discomfort emanated off the teen in waves. Aizawa nodded at the empty chair, “Sit down, Midoriya.” The command wasn’t nearly as brusk as it should have been, but Aizawa wasn’t about to punish the kid for vomiting.

Midoriya hastily returned to his desk, eyes downcast and lip still held prisoner by his teeth. Uraraka tried to catch his gaze, but was unsuccessful. The deep crease between her eyebrows grew deeper, and she watched her friend sadly, worry filling her brown eyes as Aizawa called the class to order and gave them their training assignments.

As the class hurried to the gym, Aizawa called out to his green-eyed student, “Midoriya, take it easy today. Don’t overdo it.” The teen looked for a moment like he wanted to argue, but nodded and shuffled after his classmates, his shoulders slumping as he curled in on himself and looked down at the ground. Aizawa followed him with his dark eyes, only looking away when a quiet cough sounded to his right. He turned to see Uraraka standing by him nervously.

“Um…Aizawa-sensei? Can I talk to you for a moment?” The girl’s expression was earnest and worried, a stubborn tilt to her chin showing her resolve.

Aizawa nodded, motioning for her to follow him as they trailed after the rest of the class. He turned out the lights and shut the door behind them as Uraraka gathered her courage. She coughed, then hastily blurted, “I think Deku isn’t eating enough.”

Shouta paused as he locked the door, then slid the key into his oversized pocket, his hands disappearing into the black fabric soon after. “Explain,” he requested, his voice serious, but not unkind. He turned to face the short teen with what he hoped was an open

expression. It seemed to encourage Uraraka, so she continued.

“Well…I hugged him last week and he’s so skinny! Which is weird because I could barely get my arms around him before the internships! I think he hides with his jacket, but it’s super big on him now. And… and this isn’t the first time he’s thrown up at school recently either!” Uraraka’s brown eyes gazed pleadingly up at Aizawa.

Shouta frowned at the last statement, feeling something settle uncomfortably in his gut. “That’s news to me. When was he sick before?”

Uraraka flushed, “I…Deku didn’t want me to tell anyone. I think he was worried you’d find out, and he would be sent home.”

“You’ve told me now, at least. When was it?” Aizawa watched his student, proud of her for coming forward. He noticed how skinny Midoriya was as well, of course, but frequent vomiting was a worrying sign regardless.

“On Monday, after English,” Uraraka admitted. “And…I think last Friday, before class. He said ‘no’ when I asked him, but he was *really* pale.” She frowned, eyes downcast as she shuffled her feet.

Aizawa pressed her, needing to know if there was further evidence to support her statements. “Uraraka,” he grunted gently, “if there’s something more, I need to know.”

The brown-haired girl sighed, shaking her head. “I…I’m just…really worried about him. He’s been so down ever since the internships, and he’s not taking care of himself. I just…I didn’t know what else to do.” She glanced up at Aizawa, eyes uncertain.

Shouta softened his expression, and nodded at her. “Thank you for telling me. I noticed he was thinner as well. I’ll look into it.”

Relief washed across the young girl’s face, and she bowed, saying, “Thanks, sensei.”

Aizawa nodded down the hall after the rest of the class, “Get going, then. We still have training.”

Uraraka’s eyes went wide, staring after her classmates disappearing across the green. She hastily called, “Yes, Aizawa-sensei! Right away!” She ran after the rest of Class 1-A, a lighter skip to her step than before.

Shouta followed at a measured pace behind his class, a subtle frown creasing his dark brow. *Midoriya…*He thought over his last few interactions with the teen. Painted in this new light, he saw the beginning of a pattern emerging. He just wasn't sure what it was yet.

"What's going on, Problem Child?" He muttered to himself, that familiar twist to his gut returning. Something was very wrong.

Chapter End Notes

Well, here I am writing a fanfiction after years of saying never again. My Hero Academia has drawn me back into fanfics and honestly I'm not even mad.

I really just started writing it to get the idea out of my head and as a creative writing exercise to make a new hobby, but I'm posting it so people who like it can enjoy the story. :)

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku sat at the well-worn and well-loved desk in what once felt like his bedroom. Now, with the walls stripped of his posters and all his knick-knacks and figures in a pile in the living-room, it felt cold and impersonal. The only part of the room that he refused to remove was the bright All Might comforter on his bed. He needed something to sleep under, afterall.

Staring down at his notebook, Izuku noted down all the items he just placed in the 'sell pile' as he was dubbing it.

"One limited edition Silver-Age All Might Smash poster, two limited edition Bronze-Age All Might Smash posters, one in English, one in Japanese, one limited edition Golden-Age…" His muttering continued as he ran through the list of items, occasionally running out into the nearly-empty living room to double check his list. Each trip caused him to slump into his desk chair again, legs shaky and panting heavily.

"And one limited run Golden-Age All Might figurine with playback of actual recordings of All Might's iconic catch-phrases." The green-haired teen looked over the large list of merchandise he jotted down into his newest notebook, "*Adult Responsibilities for the Present*", and felt a lump form in his stomach. The hero merchandise piled delicately in the living room had been a passion project of his for years, slowly collecting the rare and sought-after items that one could only get by attending almost every Hero convention in Japan. The thought of selling it all made his thin stomach clench tightly and tears form at the corners of his sunken eyes.

*But,* Izuku thought, *what's the point of owning this if I can't even afford to rent the room they're displayed in?* He shook his head, wiping the stray tears from his eyes and steeling his emotions. "You've got more important things to do than worry about posters," he told himself, quashing the rising emotions and ignoring the slight echo of his voice in the empty room. He stood from his desk, notebook, pen, and phone in his slim hand. "If I can get the pictures taken of these before six o'clock, I can just make it to the library in time to check prices and be back around eight. Then I can heat up the last of my rice for dinner."

The green-eyed kid grimaced at the thought of plain rice for dinner for the tenth time in a row, but his reluctance was quickly squashed down. “You got something delicious for lunch today and you threw it up, so make due with rice for dinner again. It’s not like that was a free meal either…” Izuku trailed off, remembering he didn’t add that particular debt to his running tally of expenses. He sighed, pulling the notebook out and opening to the dogeared set of pages. “One UA meal, approximately…” He scratched his head, the dark green curls falling limply against his hand as he quickly calculated the cost of all the ingredients. “1000 yen?” He wrote it down.

The notebook snapped shut with his pen tucked neatly between the pages as the short teenager pulled out his phone and took photos of each item individually, cursing his height and the fact that the couch was sold two weeks prior. The extra height would have helped to get a wider shot for the larger items. He then grabbed his apartment key and strode purposefully out the door at 5:45, studiously ignoring the single folded piece of paper on the kitchen counter with ‘*Izuku’* written on it in his mother’s handwriting.

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Aizawa was ready for the week to be over. After a long evening of grading papers, a long night of patrol, and a long morning of teaching rambunctious teenagers, he was reaching his limit. The tired hero was crawling into the bright yellow sleeping bag he kept under the teacher’s desk, when he spotted Midoriya standing to leave with Uraraka, notebook in hand and no bento to be seen. Aizawa silently cursed as he stood again, calling out crisply across the classroom, “Midoriya, come talk to me for a moment.”

The remaining students all started whispering to each other in hushed conversation as they fled through the door, not wanting to be caught in the crossfire if Aizawa was about to scold Midoriya.

“Uh oh! Midoriya’s in trouble!”

“Wonder what he did?”

“Aizawa’s been more grouchy than usual today. Hope Mido-bro survives!”

While he waited for the rest of 1-A to vacate the classroom, he examined his green-haired student with Uraraka’s concerns from yesterday in mind. Though Midoriya started in this class fairly thin, he always filled out his uniform and showed a decent amount of muscle

definition. Now, his uniform jacket hung limply from his frame. His cheeks, which previously looked like baby fat moved in and decided to stay permanently, were sunken in. The teen's jawline and cheekbones jutted out of his round face, giving him a gaunt look that was ill-suited to the sunshine boy Aizawa was used to.

The hair on Aizawa's neck stood on-end, not liking what he was seeing in the slightest and feeling an intense urge to march the kid to Recovery Girl's office immediately. He squashed the urge. At least for right now.

"Forget your lunch again, Midoriya?" The Erasure Hero tried keeping his voice neutral, not wanting to make the kid feel uneasy. The effect was slightly nullified by the gravelly quality of his voice from lack of sleep the night before.

Midoriya bit his thin bottom lip, green eyes looking anywhere but at Aizawa. He opened his mouth several times as if to speak, but nothing came out. Shouta waited patiently, letting the teen come to whatever he was going to say. His shoulders visibly tense, Midoriya gripped the straps on his bag tightly and mumbled, "Y-yes, sensei."

Aizawa nodded, relieved the boy didn't lie to him. *It's a start*, he thought. Trying to soften his expression, he let his half-glare drop and pulled out the same notepad from yesterday. Ripping some of his patrol notes off the top and shoving them into a deep pocket, he rapidly wrote another message for Lunch Rush and held it out to the nervous teenager.

"I meant what I said yesterday, kid. If you forget your lunch, come talk to me. No questions asked." He attempted to maintain eye contact, but the teen refused to meet his eyes.

Midoriya nodded sharply as he took the note and pivoted toward the door, his face turning slightly red as he did. Aizawa just barely caught a glance of the teen's bottom lip held squarely between his teeth and watery green eyes as Midoriya turned quickly. Aizawa called out after him, voice still gentle. "Make sure to eat plenty today. We've got training in the gym this afternoon."

A mumbled, "Y-yes, sensei," was his only reply.

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Izuku hurried down the hallway, his stomach turning and clenching in knots. He felt nauseous already, and there wasn't even food in his

stomach yet. He pushed into the nearest bathroom, locking himself into a stall and leaning over the empty bowl hurriedly. Aizawa-sensei's note fluttered to the ground beside him as he dry-heaved. Tears streamed down his cheeks at the painful clenching in his stomach, the muscles spasming rapidly as he coughed up water and bile. It seemed like an age before the contractions of his diaphragm finally stopped and he could take a steady breath again. Tears continued to drip from his chin as he curled in on himself on the bathroom tile. It was mercifully cold against his hot skin, and Izuku welcomed the chill.

*I must have a stomach bug,* he thought. *I shouldn't be sick this often.* His breathing evened out slowly as he gazed at the crinkled note from Aizawa-sensei. Izuku felt emotion washing over him. It was kind—incredibly so—for Aizawa to make sure he could eat. Izuku just wished it didn't have to be repaid later. His budget was strained enough without additional meals to pay for.

Izuku sat straight, feeling dizzy and weak as he leaned up against the tile wall, glad he got a corner stall. He tiredly reached up to pull the lever on the toilet, looking away as the meager contents of his stomach swirled and disappeared.

He glanced at the note again, glassy eyes unseeing as he thought about what to do. If he ate anything right now he was sure it would make a reappearance. Not to mention what he needed to pay Aizawa back for. However, if he *didn't* eat, Aizawa may notice. He weighed his options: Aizawa's ire or going without food even sooner than he thought. Sighing, Izuku stood on shaky legs, the note in hand. He tucked it gently into a pocket of his backpack and made to leave the bathroom. If he couldn't keep the food down, there was no point eating it anyway. He would just face Aizawa's displeasure.

*He's being really nice,* Izuku thought as he rinsed his mouth at the sink, *and helpful.* He turned to exit the bathroom. *But I don't need any help. I'll be fine.*

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Aizawa, feeling more alive after his lunchtime nap, waited in Gym Gamma for his class to finish changing into their hero costumes. Cementoss finished creating the training arena Aizawa requested at staff meeting this morning and nodded to him before leaving to tend to his own class.

Looking over the large uneven pillars, the dark-haired hero silently ate a jelly pack and prepared himself for the inevitable wave of excited teenagers. Sighing and tossing the empty jelly pack into the nearly empty garbage can near the entrance, he turned to face the door to the locker rooms, his most bored expression on his face even as his dark eyes locked onto the head of green hair causing his current ulcer.

Kaminari and Ashido rushed forward, shouting, “Come on guys! This is going to be awesome! Look at all this!” The rest of the class followed at a more sedate pace, but still exclaimed excitedly when they saw the state of the gym. Eraserhead closed his eyes briefly, steeling himself against the excessive noise.

“Quiet down. We’ve got training to do.”

The class immediately fell silent, well aware of their teacher’s intensity. Aizawa looked them all over, eyes lingering on Midoriya and the clearly loose hero costume he wore. The hero filed that away with the rest of his concerns for the teen.

“Today we’re focusing on movement. Some of you,” he glanced at Bakugo and Iida, “have quirks that allow you to move quite freely through most terrain. However,” at this he activated his quirk, black hair floating slightly as he stared at the class with red eyes, “you won’t always have a quirk to fall back on.” He deactivated Erasure and shoved his hands in his pockets. “You’ll all be learning how to maneuver today. *Without* quirks.”

The class grumbled unhappily between themselves, whining about the lack of quirks.

“*Quiet.*” Aizawa growled, feeling a headache coming on. *Maybe I shouldn’t have taken that nap.* The class went silent again with the exception of Mineta, who kept cursing under his breath. “Knowing how to move is far more important than having a quirk to help you. You won’t be able to use your quirk in every situation. Sometimes it would be too dangerous, or could give away your location.” He waited a moment for the logic to sink in for the majority of the class.

Aizawa gestured at Bakugo and pointed to one of the thirty-foot cement pillars. “How would you get up there without your quirk?”

Bakugo scoffed, putting off a confident air while he thought. When he couldn’t come up with a clever solution, he growled, “I’d have to use a rope.”

“Right.” Aizawa tugged his capture scarf tighter around his body, pulling his yellow goggles over his eyes. “Watch me.” He ran straight at the pillar, leaping up and pushing off the cement with his feet towards a taller wall not far from it. Bouncing back and forth between the two surfaces, he was easily able to reach the top ledge. He heaved himself onto the flat surface and stood, looking down at the awed faces of his students below.

“Today, I’m going to teach you the basics of parkour, which is what I used to get on this pillar. It’s an older technique from before quirks, but it is no less applicable to hero work in the modern day.” He let his goggles fall back around his neck and grinned evilly at the students. “Let’s begin.”

The underground hero spent the next hour teaching the basics and then let them loose on the cement parkour park, walking among them and providing corrections where necessary. Several of the students took to it quickly, namely Bakugo and Asui. Shouta watched Midoriya out of the corner of his eye. The teen clearly understood the technique, however, he took multiple long breaks to catch his breath between attempts, his face pale and strained. Aizawa could see the boy’s legs shaking violently from across the room.

The pro hero strolled among his class, appearing nonchalant as he slowly made his way over to Midoriya. His dark eyes watched the teen as he carefully bounced between two short walls, legs doing most of the heavy lifting if the shaking in his arms was anything to go by. The kid got halfway up the 20 foot wall before his momentum couldn’t carry him further and he slid to the bottom, landing with a loud *thump* on his backside.

Midoriya sat on the padded cushions he landed on, panting. He swayed as if he was about to fall, but caught himself against his knees and leaned forward, his face clammy with sweat and exertion. Aizawa could see the fatigue from across the gym. Breaking the pretense of making his rounds through the class, the pro hero strode directly toward Midoriya. Not far off, Uraraka and Iida looked on with worried glances.

Crouching next to the teen as he struggled to catch his breath, Aizawa murmured, “Did you eat lunch today, kid?”

Midoriya paused for a moment, thinking, then let out a weak, “Y-yes, s-s-sensei.”

Aizawa watched the teen, noting the stutter was worse than usual and his bottom lip was once again tucked tightly between his teeth. He hummed, glancing around at the rest of the class to appear nonchalant. “Did you really?” He asked, tone laced with disbelief.

Midoriya’s head shot up, a rebuttal ready on his lips, but he stopped abruptly when green eyes locked with dark brown. As if sensing the seriousness in Aizawa’s expression, the teen looked down at his knees, which were dirtied from the frequent landings. He shook his head, his fingers clenching tightly in his gym pants, “N-no, sensei.”

“I didn’t think so,” Aizawa sighed as he rose to stand and motioned for Midoriya to follow. “You’re done training for the day. Come on.”

Midoriya scrambled shakily to his feet, eyes wide and frantic as he brushed the dirt off his pants. “I-I can keep going, s-sensei! I’m a-alright!” The teen stood for a moment, then swayed as his face paled from standing too quickly.

Aizawa grabbed Midoriya’s elbow as he stumbled, stabilizing him. Once the boy regained his footing, Aizawa relaxed his grip, though he kept his hand around the skinny arm. He was very thin. None of the muscle mass he expected remained on the kid. Whatever was going on, it wasn’t a recent development.

“You’re about to pass out. You need to sit down and eat something.” Aizawa, gentle but firm, led the green-haired boy to a bench at the edge of the gym. He sat Midoriya down, then rummaged in his pocket for a jelly packet. He grimaced, wishing there was something more substantial than the protein pack. Holding the green packet out, Shouta said, “Here. Eat this.”

Midoriya took the tube of jelly carefully, a frown between his eyebrows. He squished it several times before he bit his lip, swallowed heavily, and looked up at Aizawa with an embarrassed and apologetic look. “Um…s-sensei? I don’t think I-I can.” He held the snack out to Aizawa, a slight red hue to his freckled cheeks as he avoided eye contact.

Aizawa scanned the teen’s face, noting a slight green hue to Midoriya’s cheeks as his trembling hand held out the jelly packet. The pro made no move to take it back. “Try for me, kid. I don’t need you passing out in the middle of class.” He glanced around at the rest of his students, marking their progress and how much time was left in the class. Turning back to Midoriya, whose face was paler and greener

than before, he grunted, “Stay here while I finish the lesson. Don’t get up until you know you won’t fall over.”

Midoriya nodded as Aizawa gathered the rest of the class together, sitting meekly against the wall. Shouta pointed at the pillar he climbed at the beginning of class. “All of you are going to attempt to climb as high as you can. I’ll mark down your score and use it as a baseline to test you again in a few weeks.” The class muttered excitedly, happy to have some healthy competition.

“Kaminari, you first.”

One-by-one his students attempted to climb the cement pillar. Most couldn’t clear five feet, but Bakugo cleared fifteen before falling, a proud look on his face as he yelled his superiority to the rest of the class. Aizawa noticed Midoriya looking on with interest, his color returning as he rested against the wall. The jelly pack remained unopened between his fingers, which didn’t surprise the pro hero at all. Midoriya could’ve been nauseous all day, which would explain why he didn’t eat lunch. Shouta made a mental note to get the kid something to drink so he didn’t pass out from low blood sugar before he left for home.

The rest of the students finished their attempts while Shouta kept score in his phone. Asui did quite well, reaching Bakugo’s record and then exceeding it. Mineta complained in the back about how she couldn’t *not* use her quirk. Ashido gained a respectable twelve feet, while Tokoyami barely got three.

Once each student took their turn, Aizawa called for the end of class and sent them back to the locker rooms. Uraraka and Iida both watched Midoriya with concern as he sat quietly against the back wall. The green-haired teen seemed to notice their gaze and waved at them with a small smile as he stood slowly. His freckled face turned to Aizawa as he made his way over, his legs no longer shaking, but a hesitance to his steps.

Midoriya’s hand clenched his gym shorts as he stuttered, “Umm…C-can I do the challenge, A-Aizawa-sensei? I know y-you said I was done t-training…”

Shouta eyed the nervous teen. He said nothing, simply watching as Midoriya attempted to persuade him. Green eyes met his own dark ones as the kid bit his lip before speaking again, this time stumbling straight into a nearly incoherent stream of words.

“I…I just don’t want t-to get behind everyone. I’ve been trying r-really hard to catch up and I know I’m s-still not where I should be, so if I could d-do the challenge at least I’d know where I’m at with the rest o-of my classmates. And I can try to improve, because I know my baseline and everything, so c-can I? Sensei?”

Aizawa honestly wasn’t sure what to do. The kid was clearly ill. He wasn’t shaking anymore, but his cheeks were still paler than he’d like to see. Not to mention the clear weight loss from whatever was ailing him. On the other hand, he knew all too well what being at a disadvantage in hero training felt like. Crushing was the best word he could use to describe it. The urge to reject Midoriya’s request and the urge to give in to it warred in his gut, causing an unhappy clenching in his already tense muscles.

Taking a deep breath, Aizawa decided. He gestured at the pillar as he pulled out his phone and set it up to record the distance Midoriya climbed. “If you pass out,” Aizawa warned, “I’m taking you straight to Recovery Girl.”

Midoriya nodded, green eyes wide with thanks as he stepped forward, muttering to himself about trajectories and force while sizing up the concrete pillar. The green-haired teen easily broke through the five- and ten-foot mark, then faltered as he approached fifteen. Aizawa saw the teen’s foot slip and his arms, shaking heavily again, failed to brace as Midoriya came in to make another leap. His momentum, still directed at the gray wall when he couldn’t redirect, carried his body straight into the hard cement, causing his head to smash into it with a sickening thud.

Aizawa immediately sprung into action, his capture scarf darting out to lift him into the air on the path of interception with the unconscious teen. Looping an arm around the skinny kid’s middle and pulling the boy’s weight with him into the direction of his swing, Aizawa noticed with a pit in his stomach that Midoriya was far lighter than he should have been. *Damnit kid, why did I let you do this?*

The underground hero swung around and let the capture scarf loosen until he was supporting Midoriya’s weight on solid ground. He immediately laid the kid down, checking the head injury which was beginning to bleed red into the green mop of curls and calling out to Midoriya in an attempt to wake him. When the attempts failed, Aizawa cursed and slowly lifted the Problem Child into his arms, feeling Midoriya’s extremely bony elbow dig into his ribs. He made straight for the infirmary, barely noticing as Iida and Uraraka stared

after them with worry.

“Oh my gosh! Aizawa-sensei, is Deku okay? That was such a hard hit!” Uraraka’s voice echoed in the nearly empty gym. She hurried after her homeroom teacher, brown eyes shining with concern as her eyebrows knitted together.

“I’m sure Recovery Girl will be able to handle whatever injuries he sustained! He’s in fully capable hands, Uravity!” Iida’s reply was tense, betraying his own worry.

“He’ll be fine,” Aizawa grunted as he kicked open the door leading out of the gym, trying to hurry but not wanting to jostle Midoriya too much. He strode across the grassy area between the gyms and the main school, still calling to Midoriya in an attempt to wake him.

“Come on kid, wake up. You’ve probably got a bad concussion, and I need you to be conscious.” Aizawa grit his teeth when the green-haired teen remained unresponsive, then relaxed the slightest bit as Midoriya’s eyelids fluttered to reveal unfocused green irises. Shouta grunted as he pushed open the door to Recovery Girl’s office.

“What’s happened now?” Recovery Girl grumbled as she toddled around a corner to see Aizawa laying Midoriya on the closest gurney. “Oh dear!”

“Hit his head. Hard.” Aizawa grumbled, trying to keep Midoriya’s attention so the injured teen didn’t fall asleep. “Kid, keep your eyes on me.” He snapped a couple times, watching the wide, confused eyes staring around.

The short nurse stepped up to the bed and immediately began checking Midoriya’s vitals. She flashed a light over his eyes, watching the pupil's response. She frowned at what she saw, attaching a heart rate monitor and a blood pressure cuff to Aizawa’s student. A soft beeping sound filled the room. It seemed to help Midoriya stay focused as he turned his head with a wince to watch the little red line jump up and down.

“Young man, can you tell me today’s date?” Recovery Girl patiently waited for the answer, nodding when it was the correct one, though the response was slow. She stepped back, reaching for her patient’s hand to lay a kiss on the back of it. The bleeding from Midoriya’s head wound immediately stopped and the skin stitched itself back together, though the confused look still remained.

“Sit here for a few minutes, dear,” Recovery hummed as she turned to her computer, grabbing a clipboard to add a visit report to Midoriya’s medical file.

Aizawa relaxed slightly, but still remained uneasy. “Can you bring up his emergency contact? I need to inform his parents.” Though he was looking at the school nurse, Aizawa saw Midoriya’s head snap up, his eyes unfocused but wide with…worry? A phone number written on a sticky-note entered his field of view. Beneath the number was the name Midoriya Inko. Shouta pulled the phone beside Recovery Girl’s desk off the wall as she added the report to Midoriya’s electronic files. Aizawa caught a glimpse at the kid’s last physical exam. The weight said 180 pounds. His eye twitched as his stress levels immediately sky-rocketed. Midoriya, while still maintaining some muscle, couldn’t be anywhere near that weight now. If Aizawa had to guess, he would say nearer to 150.

Making a mental note to talk to Recovery Girl after this call, he punched in the number, double-checking it before hitting ‘call.’ The phone went immediately to a dial tone, and a robotic woman’s voice chimed, “This call cannot be connected as the number you are trying to reach is no longer in service.”

The plastic phone clicked back into its cradle. “You’re sure this is the number?” Aizawa muttered to Recovery Girl, keeping his voice low as he glanced at his injured student. The teen swayed back and forth, though his eyes seemed to be watching them both curiously.

Recovery Girl looked up as she digitally signed the report, frowning. She looked over the number, then double-checked it against Midoriya’s file. Aizawa leaned down to look as well. The same number and name were present on Midoriya’s UA application. Shouta grit his teeth, then tried the number again. And again. And a fourth time for luck. The same robotic message greeted him each time. Recovery Girl caught his eye on the last call, closing her eyes and sighing as he shook his head in the negative.

Setting the phone down gently, Aizawa pulled his cell phone out and sent a text to Hizashi.

*Shouta: I have to stay late. One of my students got injured in training today.*

While he waited for a reply, Shouta glanced at Midoriya’s application again. A picture of the teen when he first arrived smiled back at him,

the picture of health. A far cry from the concussed boy sitting unsteadily on a gurney in the other room.

His phone beeped.

*Hizashi: Which one?? U don't usually have to stay unless it's bad*

*Shouta: Midoriya. He gave himself a concussion. I can't contact his parents, that's why I'm staying.*

*Hizashi: The green bean?? :(*

*Hizashi: Do u want me to come stay with u?*

*Shouta: No need. I may need a pick up after I bring him home.*

*Hizashi: Of course! No response from his 'rentals? Weird*

*Shouta: I believe parents is the word you were looking for. And no.*

*Hizashi: I know what I said! I hope everything is okay. Txt me when u wanna go home?*

*Shouta: I will.*

Aizawa put his phone away, dark eyes glancing up for Recovery Girl. He found her next to Midoriya.

"How is your pain, dear?"

A mumbled answer that Shouta couldn't hear was the reply. The nurse nodded, then moved to her cabinet to pull a small bottle out. She shook one white pill into a small plastic cup, then put the bottle away and locked it. Slowly, she moved back to her patient, holding out the cup and pointing to a bottle of water on the bedside. Midoriya took the pill, muttering a thanks to the elderly nurse before his wide eyes flickered up to meet Aizawa's. The teen held eye-contact for only a moment, then dropped his gaze to the red boots encasing his feet.

Recovery Girl stepped past the underground hero, motioning for him to follow her into her office. She called back to Midoriya, "Sit there for a moment while the medication kicks in, then we can get you home." The teen nodded, eyes never leaving his feet.

The nurse shut the door, then fixed Aizawa with an even, strict stare. "Aizawa, you know that boy isn't well." It wasn't a question.

Shouta nodded, “He has apparently thrown up several times in the last few weeks, and I know with certainty he hasn’t been eating lunch, at the very least. His friends are worried.”

“As well they should be,” Chiyo tutted, settling on her stool and frowning. “If he wasn’t shaking like a leaf, I’d keep him here until we get ahold of his parents,” she stated. Her voice betrayed the agitation she felt. “But,” she took a deep breath, “he’s clearly uncomfortable and very nervous. I won’t keep him here like that.” Her brown eyes met Aizawa’s as he raised an eyebrow.

“Nervous? He seemed disoriented. I didn’t see—”

Recovery Girl interrupted with a click of her tongue. “His hand. The knuckles were completely white on both hands. You might not have seen it, but I certainly did.” She paused, thinking, while Aizawa filed that information away. He recalled Midoriya clenching his fists earlier today, and wondered if *he* made the teen uncomfortable or if it was something else. Recovery Girl continued her train of thought, “Regardless, I won’t keep him here if it makes him nervous. That would be counterproductive, if better for his health.” She sighed. “You’ll be taking him home then?”

Aizawa grunted in affirmative. “Kid could barely walk after training earlier. I’m sure that won’t improve with pain killers and a concussion.”

“Certainly not with the dose I gave him,” Recovery Girl huffed. “That boy. Never easy when he comes in. Always the worst possible outcome of whatever injury he sustained. Broken bone? No, he spiral fractured it using his quirk. Bloody nose? No, it’s bent all sideways and his sinuses are damaged. Concussion? Yes, and nausea and throwing up and losing weight.” The older woman huffed again as she stood. “You’ll bring him in first thing next week. I want a full physical. He’s lost too much weight since the last time I saw him. An unhealthy amount by the looks of it.”

“I’ll make sure to bring him in,” Aizawa agreed as they left her office. Across the room, a glassy-eyed, tired, and pale Midoriya watched them walk toward him. The bright lights above the gurney made the hollows in his cheeks even more apparent than before.

Shouta vowed to get to the bottom of this. He refused to let Midoriya down.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter 2 is here! I was originally going to make this story fairly short (like 4-5 chapters), but I've decided to draw it out a little bit. So, hope you like it!

We get some idea of what's going on with Izuku, and Aizawa starts to notice things aren't at all well with the Green Bean.

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku sat in a daze, a blinding headache shooting red-hot pain through his skull. His eyes were open, but he couldn't focus on anything. Muffled voices grumbled from the direction Aizawa-sensei and Recovery Girl went, but the words were indistinguishable. Tired, green eyes slipped closed as he waited for the painkillers to kick in. His temples throbbed in time with his pulse. Izuku took slow, steady breaths. Any excess movement made the pain in his head flair.

If his stomach wasn't empty, Izuku was sure he'd be throwing up all over the floor. As it was, he was barely keeping a lid on it. No sense letting a perfectly good painkiller go to waste.

It was good, he decided, that his mother wasn't home. He didn't want to worry her with his injuries. He was so useless all the time, getting hurt just about every day now. Hero training was rough, bone-breaking work, especially for someone like him. For only having a quirk for the last six months, Izuku thought he was making quite good progress in catching up to his classmates. So, even if he did get hurt, he was glad Aizawa-sensei let him try the challenge. Izuku needed to keep going, keep working hard, or he'd never live up to Kaachan and the others. Not that a worthless deku like himself would ever reach their level, but maybe he could get close.

The mumbled words from the other room suddenly got clearer, and footsteps tapped against the tile floor along with the soft 'click' of Recovery Girl's cane. "…lost too much weight since I saw him last..." She continued talking, but a throb of pain burst through Izuku's skull and he missed the last part of her sentence.

A deeper voice replied. "I'll make sure to bring him in."

Izuku's eyes opened, wincing at the bright lights of the examination room. He locked gazes with Aizawa-sensei, the man's intense stare piercing right through him. The pro hero's face was locked into a strange expression Izuku hadn't seen before. The way he looked at Izuku made the teen feel like he was a bug under a microscope. Disgusting, but interesting. Izuku didn't like that feeling.

Biting his lip, Izuku mulled over what the two were saying as they approached. *My weight? Nothing's wrong, I don't need to come back.*

Recovery Girl toddled up to Izuku's bedside, checking his blood pressure and pulse, before smiling kindly at him. "Is the medication kicking in yet, young man?"

Izuku went to shake his head in the negative, but instantly felt the throbbing intensify. He mumbled quietly, "No."

Recovery Girl nodded, telling him to sit tight while it worked its magic, before heading back to her office. Aizawa stayed in the room, that strange expression still on his face as he leaned against the wall of the infirmary. Izuku tried to avoid eye contact, staring instead at his boots while he slowly took in each breath.

The room was silent for several seconds. Izuku could feel his homeroom teacher's gaze on him, but he didn't lift his head. It throbbed angrily everytime he shifted, and he didn't think he could meet Aizawa-sensei's eyes anyway. His cheeks flushed. What an embarrassment he must be to the man. Practically begging to be given a chance and being rushed to the infirmary immediately afterward? *Just a worthless deku, even now.* The errant thoughts drifted through his hazy mind like oil on water, not part of his usual thoughts but impossible to get rid of once it was there.

Aizawa spoke, his tone low. "I tried calling your mother. The line wouldn't go through. Said it wasn't in service."

Izuku's stomach twisted, large knots driving his nausea further toward vomiting. He swallowed heavily, tasting the tang of bile as he tried to calm his writhing stomach with slow breaths. His hands clenched against his knees as he braced himself, head still bent to look at his shoes while he answered. "S-she lost her ph-phone last w-week. She h-hasn't gotten a n-new one yet." The lie tasted wrong in his mouth. Or maybe that was the bile? Izuku couldn't tell. He breathed, hoping Aizawa-sensei wouldn't notice. He didn't need any more trouble than he was already in.

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Aizawa grit his teeth at the lie, but refrained from calling Midoriya on his bluff at the look on the kid's face. Midoriya looked ready to vomit at any moment. The kid's hands, white at the knuckles with how hard he squeezed them, were shaking heavily, and his bottom lip was pinched firmly between his teeth. Judging by the glassy look of his

green eyes, the painkiller Recovery Girl gave him was starting to work its magic, but the stiff posture remained. *Not the pain, then,* Aizawa thought as he cataloged the boy's reactions. *Does he usually stutter this much?*

Relaxing his posture, the Erasure hero shoved his hands into the deep pockets of his hero uniform and put a bored yet concerned look on his face. "Guess I'll be taking you home then, if we can't reach your parents." He paused, watching, then continued. "Feel up to walking, kid?"

"Y-yes, sensei," Midoriya mumbled.The green-haired teen stood slowly, his legs shaking and breathing unsteady as he adjusted to standing. Aizawa took all this in and stepped forward to keep a hand on his student's back to steady him. He felt Midoriya's slim shoulders tense then relax as they slowly made their way out of the infirmary, Aizawa nodding to Recovery Girl as she watched them leave with a worried look on her elderly face.

The pair walked quietly beside each other, Aizawa watching Midoriya out of the corner of his eye and Midoriya studiously watching his feet as he stumbled along beside his teacher. The pro hero led them both toward Gym Gamma as he thought through the day's events. Midoriya clearly didn't eat lunch even though Aizawa ensured he had a free meal; Midoriya was clearly losing a lot of weight and couldn't train as hard as he used to; and Midoriya lied about his mother's phone getting lost.

While the UA teacher contemplated his student, Midoriya seemed to relax slightly. The medication was clearly kicking in as his gait swayed back and forth more alarmingly. Aizawa slid his hand more firmly around the kid's shoulder as Midoriya asked him, "W-where are we going, Aizawa-sensei? Isn't the main g-gate that way?" The teen pointed a shaky thumb behind them in the opposite direction.

"You need to change and get your backpack." Aizawa eyed the stumbling teen as they walked slowly toward Gym Gamma. Green eyes glanced up at him multiple times as they were walking, glassy and nervous. The pro hero pretended not to notice.

"That makes sense…" Midoriya mumbled, his voice trailing off as they moved up the sidewalk toward the large gym.

Aizawa let them walk in silence for a few moments. There was a distinct difference in Midoriya's stutter when he was speaking now

than in the infirmary. Formulating a theory, he asked, “Is your mother at home right now?”

Midoriya stumbled a step, as his head swiveled so fast Aizawa worried he might break something. Wide green eyes stared up at the pro hero as the kid’s breathing quickened. Again, Aizawa didn’t react to any of the teen’s clear signs of panic, simply preventing the boy from tumbling to the ground as they walked.

“Um…sh-she’s at w-work, I th-think? Sh-she w-works r-r-really la-late.”

Aizawa hummed in acknowledgement, though his mind was racing. Midoriya was a terrible liar, he decided. The stutter really gave it away. Not to mention Midoriya didn’t look at all confident in what he was saying. *But why is Midoriya lying?* The thought circled around and around his head while Aizawa continued the conversation like nothing was wrong.

“How late? I have to go on patrol tonight, but I can stay with you until then. Will she be back by eight?” Aizawa threw out a random time. He never had a set timeframe for starting his patrols. He was less predictable that way.

Midoriya bit his lip harshly as they walked, taking his time to respond. His eyes darted frantically around their surroundings as he worried at his bottom lip and his hands clenched tightly in the pants of his hero uniform. Aizawa didn’t like how long it took him to answer.

“I-I don’t th-think so, s-sensei. Sh-she’s a nurse. She um works r-really long hours.”

Through his arm around the teen’s shoulders, Aizawa felt Midoriya’s muscles tense and his breath quicken rapidly. Instinctively Shouta’s thumb rubbed soothing patterns against the thin shoulder of his student. He seemed to recall Midoriya discussing his mother’s work with Uraraka and Iida when Iida told them about his brother Ingenium. *But*, the pro hero thought, *if his mother is a nurse, why has she not noticed how thin he is?* The line of thinking was disquieting.

They stopped in front of Gym Gamma as Aizawa unlocked the door and stepped both of them through. “Go get changed, then. I need to make some calls. I’ll be outside.”

Midoriya nodded and moved slowly toward the locker room. Aizawa waited until he heard the metal locker opening inside before he

stepped into the setting sun. He sighed as he pulled out his phone, scrolled to Hizashi's contact, and hit Call.

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Izuku slowly pulled off his hero costume and tugged on his school uniform. The usually tight fabric slid over his skinny limbs easily, not even tight around the shoulders like it usually was. But he didn't pay any mind to that. His mind was racing in the silence of the locker room, his heavy heartbeat the only sound to accompany his quiet muttering.

"Mom's not home, and she's not coming home. Not yet, anyway. So, is Aizawa going to stay until she does? No, he has to go on patrol. Maybe I can say she called from work and will be home soon? Would he believe that? Aizawa-sensei would probably want to talk to her himself, and then he'd see I never got a call and know I was lying oh no that would be even worse! No lying, then. Well," Midoriya gulped, his wide green eyes staring unseeing at the bench across from his locker. "No *more* lying." He took in a deep breath, his head swimming as panic began to set in. He lied to Aizawa-sensei *so* many times this week. Honestly he was surprised the stern teacher hadn't taken him to task for it. Izuku was sure the pro hero was more adept at detecting lies than he himself was at telling them.

Izuku's gut clenched as he attempted to straighten his tie. The situation was *not good.* There was no way he could prevent Aizawa from finding out. Especially if his homeroom teacher insisted on staying home with him for *any* amount of time. It would be obvious. *But,* his mind supplied, *she's coming back soon. Maybe Aizawa-sensei will understand? It's not that different from Uraraka living in an apartment by herself. It's the same thing, really.*

Fully dressed and realizing he couldn't stall any longer, Izuku stood unsteadily and meandered out of the locker room. Hands clenched tightly as he pulled in shaky breath after shaky breath, he stepped out of the large gym.

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The Erasure Hero leaned against the outside of Gym Gamma and watched the orange sun setting as he waited for Midoriya to change out of his uniform in the locker room. He let his mind wander over the facts of Midoriya's current situation, trying to let the truth tell him the story instead of jumping to hasty conclusions. Logical. Precise.

Fact: Midoriya hasn't been eating enough. How much weight he lost remains to be seen.

Fact: Midoriya didn't eat the free meal provided for him today, but did eat the one yesterday. He then vomited shortly after. Connected? Maybe.

Fact: Midoriya didn't want his friends or Aizawa to know that he wasn't eating.

Fact: Midoriya lied about his mother's phone and about her presence at home. Whether that's because she is actually not home for work or some other reason is…unclear.

Fact: If Midoriya's mother didn't return by the time Aizawa had to leave for patrol, he was bringing Midoriya back to the infirmary for monitoring.

Pinching the bridge of his nose, Aizawa closed his itchy, dry eyes and sighed. Why was the green-haired teen always at the center of every problem? If the dark man didn't already know about Midoriya's super strength quirk, he swore the kid had a trouble magnet quirk with the messes that seemed to follow him around like a shadow.

"Aizawa!" A jovial voice that Aizawa easily recognized shouted across the green from the direction of the main building.

*What's he still doing here?* He thought as he opened his dark eyes to glare unimpressed at All Might in his skinny form. The blond man had a bright smile across his gaunt face and an obnoxious yellow backpack in his hand that Aizawa recognized as Midoriya's.

"Yagi," Aizawa grunted, shoving his hands into deep pockets and slumping against the building even further.

Yagi didn't seem phased by the younger man's tone, instead plowing ahead in an upbeat voice. "I was at the infirmary to give Young Midoriya his backpack, but Chiyo said you took him to get changed already."

The bored-looking hero frowned as he nodded. "How did you know he was in the infirmary?"

The skinny blond set the heavy backpack onto a nearby bench and slid his large hands into equally large pockets in the very loose suit. Rocking slowly forward and backward on his feet, Yagi coughed

awkwardly, “Eh…Nedzu told me.” Hurrying to change the subject, he continued. “Chiyo said he got a concussion? How did that happen?” The man’s piercing blue eyes glittered with worry and his sunken face showed a great amount of concern for the student.

Aizawa quirked an eyebrow at the level of interest Yagi showed for what otherwise should have been just another of his students. Deciding to get back at the man for avoiding his question with such a simple answer, he deadpanned, “He slammed headfirst into a cement pillar.”

All Might coughed roughly, his hand immediately coming up to cover his mouth with a handkerchief that Aizawa noted with some satisfaction was black instead of the usual white. Serves him right for giving Power Loader a heart attack when he left the bloody white handkerchief in the teacher’s lounge. “Wha…” He coughed again. “What?”

Aizawa hid his smirk in his capture scarf. *Too easy*…“Exactly what I said, Yagi. How else do you think he got a concussion?”

“Ah, well, I uh…I thought maybe…” The skinny man struggled to come up with a response, large hands gesticulating as he tried to overcome his shock.

Aizawa’s phone began buzzing urgently in his pocket. He pulled it out quickly, knowing any calls he got on his ‘work phone’ were typically ones he needed to answer. Glancing down at the small screen while the blond Foundational Hero Studies teacher watched curiously with wide, sunken eyes, Aizawa read ‘Tsukauchi’.

Turning away from the number one hero and walking a short distance away, Aizawa muttered, “I need to take this.”

Yagi, a look of understanding on his face, smiled and waved, saying, “Of course.”

The tired hero flipped open the small, gray phone, immediately answering with his usual, “Eraserhead.”

“Eraser, we need you to come to the precinct now. The raid on the Hair Trigger’s gun warehouse is moved up to tonight. We got a tip that they were moving their wares out early for some sort of deal, and we need to catch them with the guns or this whole case is a bust.” Tsukauchi’s usually calm voice had a tone of irritation and stress that usually only came when things didn’t go according to plan.

Aizawa cursed, looking over at Yagi, now in his recognizable All Might form, talking to Midoriya, who was dressed in his school uniform. The kid looked a little dazed as he hastily searched through his backpack for something, relaxing only when he pulled one of his notebooks. The notebook was hastily shoved back into the bag as the kid turned to answer something Yagi asked.

“Can’t it wait an hour? I have something I need to do.” Aizawa snapped, knowing Tsukauchi wouldn’t take it personally. He felt a burst of irritation at the poor timing.

“Sorry, Eraser. My team has to be in place in the next thirty minutes to pull this off. They’re moving the crates just after sunset.”

Scowling into the gray capture weapon around his neck, Aizawa pinched the bridge of his nose hard. He hoped to get an idea of what was going on with Midoriya tonight, but this raid was the culmination of several months’ worth of undercover sleuthing and long nights spent going over grainy video footage of the various Hair Trigger Gang’s members.

Aizawa made up his mind quickly, logically. “I’ll meet your team at the warehouse. Be there in twenty.” Turning to face the ever-smiling All Might and glassy-eyed Midoriya, Aizawa spoke quickly to the number one hero. “I have to go. I need you to take Midoriya home.”

Midoriya’s eyes widened dramatically as he interjected, “T-that’s okay, Aizawa-sensei! I c-can just take the t-train like u-usual. It’s r-really not that far, and I d-don’t want to inconvenience anyone. I c-can j-just go now.” Midoriya laughed nervously and waved his hand in a placating gesture as he scratched the back of his head. He grabbed his overly full backpack and turned to walk in the direction of the front gate.

Aizawa glared at the teen, who stopped quickly and bit his lip, wide green eyes looking up at him with trepidation. Unable to worry about softening the glare due to his immense time crunch, he turned back to Yagi. “Take him home, and *make sure* someone is there to watch him tonight. If you leave him alone while he’s on powerful painkillers, I’ll give you a concussion too.”

“Sure thing!” All Might shouted, a large thumbs up coming to join his overly bright smile and a slight quaver in his voice as the intensity from Aizawa. “Leave it to me, Eraser! I’ll make sure Young Midoriya gets home safe!”

Aizawa huffed and nodded, immediately turning to sprint to the front

gate, capture weapon unraveling as he hurled it towards the nearest lamppost and disappeared over the wall.

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All Might let himself deflate once Aizawa was out of sight, releasing a sigh of relief as the steam floated off him.

“Y-you really don’t have to t-take me home, All Might. I’m o-okay.” Midoriya glanced up at his tall, skinny idol, swaying slightly under the weight of his bag.

“Nonsense, young man!” Yagi smiled happily at his successor, wrapping an arm around the teen’s shoulders and steering him towards the teacher’s parking lot. “I’m more than happy to drive you home. It’ll be just like old times! Plus,” the skeletal teacher leaned down and muttered conspiratorially, “you’re saving *me*, really. Principal Nedzu wanted to have a ‘team building exercise’ for all the teachers this evening. Something about watching a three-hour documentary.”

Yagi grimaced; glad he somehow found a way to avoid the slumber-inducing event and more than happy to be in the presence of the bright sunshine teen who was as close to his own child as he’d ever have in his life.

“B-but shouldn’t you attend? If it’s P-principal Nedzu asking, that sounds like it should be important, right? I-I mean he’s your boss, so you should probably go watch the documentary! I’m sure spending time w-with the other teachers is an important matter and will make your working relationship much better…”

The blond man smiled widely and chuckled, ruffling the green mop of hair that belonged to his favorite student. “There’s my Prince of Nonsense! Glad to see you didn’t hit your head too hard!”

Izuku blushed heavily, scarred hand coming up to cover his face from the jovial teasing from his mentor. His other hand gripped his backpack tightly as he staggered down the sidewalk next to All Might.

“Besides,” Yagi continued, putting a steadying arm around the young man’s shoulders again when he noticed the wobble to his step, “it’s been a while since we’ve been able to catch up. How are your classes going?” The older man noted with concern that the boy’s shoulders were much bonier than he expected given the amount of training the young man was put through.

The two talked amicably as they strode towards All Might's old truck, Izuku telling his mentor about training and the subjects he was most excited about. At one point, the teen switched to English so All Might could give him pointers on his accent. The two then devolved into fanboying over the American Heroes they saw on the news for several minutes while All Might drove.

As they were nearing Midoriya's apartment complex, All Might remembered Aizawa's directions. "Is your mother home? I don't want to leave you on your own after a concussion."

"Oh, uh, I-I think she should b-be h-home from her n-new job b-by now." Midoriya kept his green eyes staring down at his twisting hands in his lap, pointedly not looking at his mentor.

All Might, unable to do more than glance over while driving, noticed the odd tone his student had. "New job? I thought you said she worked at the clinic down the road?"

"Y-yeah! She did. I'm k-kinda surprised y-you remembered actually," Midoriya mumbled. Then, he brightened back up, his stutter increasing as he spoke. "B-but she um…she g-got laid o-off and h-had to find a n-new job."

Yagi immediately felt pity for the poor woman. Raising a child by yourself was no easy feat, compounded by the young boy being bullied for quirklessness most of his life. The skeletal man could see the loss of a job causing a lot of problems for the small family. Concern dripping from his voice, Yagi asked, "Are you both doing alright?" He paused, thinking. Then said, "I hope you're still able to buy food?"

Midoriya immediately began waving his arms wildly in the cab of the truck, stuttering rapidly, "O-oh yeah! N-no need t-to w-worry, A-All Might! W-we're just f-fine! M-money was j-just a l-little t-tight, is all. B-but everything i-is perfectly o-okay now! Heh…"

Yagi frowned at the forceful rebuttal to his questions as he pulled into a street parking space in front of his successor's apartment complex. Voice unsure, he said, "If you're sure. But if you ever need anything, you can just ask me. Your well-being is my top priority." Yagi turned to stare straight at the young man as he parked, eyes and tone serious.

Midoriya's glassy green eyes stared up at him in awe for a moment, before he blinked and smiled widely. "I'll do that. Thanks, All Might."

Yagi chuckled deeply and feeling relieved at the sincere answer, he leaned over to ruffle the green tuft of hair on the teen's head. "How many times do I have to tell you to call me Yagi, kid? Now let's get you inside." Yagi unbuckled himself and grabbed Midoriya's yellow bag for him, studiously ignoring the very obvious iron-on patch on the front pocket depicting his own face.

The teen took his bag from the pro hero, turning to look up at the apartments and pointing to a window with a light on inside. "My m-mom must be home, the l-light's on in the l-living room."

Yagi looked up at the middle of the third floor, seeing the lit-up window. Nodding with content that his student would be taken care of tonight, he smiled down at the green-haired teen. "Looks like it. Want me to walk you to your door?"

Izuku shook his head, smiling up at his mentor. "I'll be okay. They got the e-elevator w-working again, so I don't have to take the stairs." He tugged on the straps of his backpack, feet shuffling slightly against the cooling sidewalk.

"Alright then. Get some rest, okay?" Yagi gently poked the small scar on Izuku's forehead from his injury. "No more headbutting cement pillars, you hear?"

Midoriya flushed and stared down at his shoes, which were as red as his face, in embarrassment. "Yeah, I w-will. B-bye, Yagi-san!" The short boy turned toward the apartment entrance, turning slightly to wave behind him at his teacher, his cheeks still red.

"Have a good night, young man." Yagi called after him, a large hand waving back. He turned to climb back into his truck, gunning the engine and slowly roaring away from the apartments toward his own home. He smiled to himself, glad to spend some time with the teen he thought of as a son.

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Izuku let out a relieved huff as he shut the door to his apartment behind him. The trek up the two flights of stairs took a lot out of his drug-hazed mind. He lied about the elevator working. He was certain the elevator hadn't worked since his mother started renting the place when he was six, and the landlord never showed any interest in paying for the repair.

Sighing and pulling his feet out of his red boots, Izuku made his way

into the empty apartment, passing through the bare hallway with discolored rectangles on the wallpaper where pictures once hung. Stepping into the kitchen, he set his hefty backpack down on the kitchen counter, wondering when it had ever seemed this heavy before. Middle school, he assumed. When he'd carried around every single Hero Analysis notebook he owned. The bag certainly didn't have 13 notebooks in it now, but maybe his art textbook made up the additional weight?

With his thoughts cloudy and a wave of dizziness approaching, Izuku sat on the lone chair that remained in the house and buried his freckled face in his arms on the cool counter. He was able to hide it from Aizawa-sensei and All Might, but his head still hurt a great deal. The constant pain and unsteady feeling from the painkillers made his bones weak with exhaustion. He let himself slump there against the counter for several minutes, his mind drifting as his body relaxed.

*"Izuku! Dinner's ready!"*

*The six-year-old squealed happily, running into the kitchen with socked feet and his All Might figure in his hands. "Katsudon! Mommy is it katsudon?"*

*Inko laughed at the excitement practically streaming off her young son. "Of course, honey! It's Friday, after all!"*

*"Katsudon Friday! I love Fridays!" Izuku zoomed around the counter to the kitchen table where two sets of chopsticks and glasses of water waited for their bowl companions. Inko filled both bowls, Izuku's All Might themed children's bowl and her plain one. She shuffled around the counter full of chopped vegetables and steaming rice to place the two dishes on the table.*

*"Ta-da! Your favorite for my favorite."*

*Izuku cheered, his left arm waving All Might through the air as his right grabbed his chopsticks to dig in.*

Izuku's mind wandered away from the warm memories of his early childhood and the contentedness that came with them. He felt so tired and comfortable, not wanting them to end but knowing that they were long gone.

*Izuku's hand shook as he put his key into the door of his apartment. He sniffled quietly, the large tears blurring his vision as he tried to keep from bawling in the middle of the hallway. His middle-school gakuran was stained with tears, blood, and mud.*

*The lock clicked from the inside, the door swinging open quickly. Inko looked shocked at her son as he stood there, nose slowly dripping blood and eyes streaming with tears. "Izuku! What happened?" She ushered him inside looking down both ends of the hallway before closing the door and locking it again.*

*"I-I just w-wanted to talk about h-heroes with K-Kacchan and his f-friends, b-but they said I c-couldn't hang a-around with them and K-Kacchan p-pushed me into the l-lockers. H-he said I-I was u-useless, and heroes d-don't want u-useless p-people talking about t-them!"*

*Inko brought her son into the bathroom, pulling the first aid kit out from under the sink and pointing him to sit on the edge of the bathtub. She quickly mopped up the blood and tears from Izuku's freckled face, happy to see the bleeding from his nose stopped.*

*"Now Izuku, that's not very nice to say about Katsuki. He wouldn't say that to you."*

*Izuku glanced up into his mother's face, seeing a slight chill in her eyes that he'd never seen there before. "B-but mom, that's wh-what he said!"*

*Inko snapped, "Izuku. Don't lie about your friends."*

*The quirkless boy watched his mother with wide eyes, not used to hearing this tone of voice from her.*

*His mom sighed, standing to drop the bloody paper towels into the garbage. Turning back to her son, she said sternly but quietly, "Katsuki is going to be a great hero someday, Izuku. Heroes don't tell people they're useless, do they?"*

*The freckle-faced boy slowly shook his head 'no', watery green eyes staring at his mother's stern ones. He sniffled slightly, nose smarting from being shoved into a hard, metal locker not long before.*

*"Exactly. So Katsuki didn't call you useless, and he didn't shove you into a locker. You accidentally walked into a lamppost and got a bloody nose." Inko crouched down to eye level with her son, face earnest. "So, what happened, Izuku?"*

*The twelve-year-old swallowed and licked his suddenly dry lips, tasting a metallic tinge with the salty tears. "I-I accidentally walked i-into a l-lamppost and got a b-bloody nose."*

*Inko smiled sweetly at the boy, nodded and stood. "That's right, honey.*

*Now let's get you changed out of your uniform. It needs to be washed."*

Izuku slowly lifted his pounding head from the countertop, eyes stinging from the memory. His mom was right afterall. Izuku learned to hide his injuries better, or at the very least not lie about what happened. She never asked for more details than the brief explanation he gave, and just silently patched him up until he learned to do it all himself.

Standing on unsteady legs, Izuku wandered over to the pile of hero merch he was in the process of selling. Digging around in the pile for a moment, he pulled out his All Might plush toy that he got as a birthday gift when he was ten. Izuku tucked it under his arm and moved to the corner where the lamp was set up as a sort of study station. He leaned back against the bare walls, eyes drawn to the spot where the couch once stood.

*Izuku sat on the comfy brown couch in the living room, eyes glued to the television and Hero Analysis for the Future No. 14 in hand. Tonight, there was a massive villain attack near Tokyo, and he was poised to take note of all the Tokyo heroes he didn't often see in action.*

*"This is JVN 5 news network, flying above the scene of a large-scale villain attack in the eastern part of Tokyo. The attack seems to have been centered around Tokyo General Hospital. The villains unleashed a large explosion, causing massive damage to the north wing of the hospital. Below, you can see we have several heroes responding at the scene…"*

*Scribbling furiously in his notebook, Izuku felt the excitement of seeing so many new heroes in action. He quickly made a new page for each of them, listing hero name, quirk, general tactics, strengths, weaknesses, the list went on. He'd been watching the news coverage for about thirty minutes when he heard his mothers voice float over the TV noise.*

*Inko laughed happily, "Oh! It sounds so nice over there! I wish I could have come with you when you left." She paused, presumably letting whoever she was talking to on the phone speak. "What? No, I couldn't… You…you think so? I mean, I suppose I could sell some things to pay for it." She paused again, then giggled like Izuku had never heard her do before. "Okay, let's do it. He's doing an internship for a whole week in May, I think I can come then. Yep, okay. I love you, Hisashi."*

*Izuku waited for his mother to come back into the kitchen before asking, "Was that dad?"*

*His mother, looking through the cupboards and drawers but not taking*

*anything out, absently mumbled, "What was that, Izuku?"*

*Turning off the loud TV, the green-haired teen turned around. "I asked if that was dad on the phone? Did he hang up already? I was hoping to tell him about the sports festival."*

*"Oh," Inko shook her head, smiling at Izuku, though it didn't reach her eyes. "No, honey. That was just an old friend. I might go visit while you're on your internship."*

*Izuku frowned, curious as to why his mother was lying.Knowing that arguing would just make her unhappy with him, he replied. "Okay, mom. Have a fun trip, if you go."*

*"I will, sweety. I will."*

Izuku opened his wet eyes, the dark apartment lit only by the light from the street meeting his gaze. Dark shadows ran along the carpet unimpeded by anything save for the pile of hero merch in the center. He curled his legs up, squishing the All Might plushie to his chest as he felt the tell-tale welling of emotion in his chest. Tears silently fell from his green eyes as he clutched his arms hard enough to leave circular marks in the skin and hid his face in the comfort of the All Might plush.

He remembered the train ride home from the clinic in Hosu, chatting with his classmates before waving at Iida and Todoroki as they got off on their stops. The rest of the train back to Musutafu was finished in anticipatory silence, wishing for nothing more than to hug his mother and tell her about the overly-exciting internship he had. For her to hold him in her arms and tell him that he was safe and everything was okay.

Instead, he came home to a cold, empty house and a note on the kitchen table with '*Izuku*' written on it in his mother's handwriting.

Chapter End Notes

Merry early Christmas? I dunno. Enjoy!

Also, thanks for all the comments and kudos! It really makes my day to see them. :)

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You

may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Aizawa Shouta grunted and sighed heavily as he sunk into the squishy couch in his and Hizashi's apartment. His muscles ached tiredly as he let his head fall back over the armrest, temples pounding with a massive headache from the nightmarish weekend.

The raid started in the usual way, staking out the place, sneaking into the warehouse, and calling the 'go' signal for the police team. Though Eraserhead admitted to being distracted by his irritation at not seeing Midoriya to his home, he still performed his work to his own high standard. The three disgruntled ringleaders of the Hair Trigger Gang currently sitting in a jail cell were a testament to that.

No, the problems came when the buyers of the Hair Trigger's guns decided to team up with the remaining members of the gang and open fire, with guns and quirks, on the police squad and their hero escort. Eraserhead winced as his left arm tensed, the graze wound from a stray bullet still tender after the stitches.

After the fighting broke out, Eraserhead had quickly secured the ringleaders with zip-ties and ran out into the chaos. The standoff lasted at least an hour, quirks and guns being fired across the no-man's land between the two forces, before the gang appeared to run out of bullets. Then the heroes took charge, rushing in to subdue the remaining quirk-users while the rest of the gang scattered. Eraserhead and several of the other heroes on the team took off after the fleeing gang members, securing them one-by-one. Unfortunately, several of the high-ranking members got away, leaving Eraserhead to spend the next two days tracking them to their hideout with Tsukauchi and his team. Neither man slept more than a few hours here-and-there at the precinct, their days and nights spent scouring the streets and enlisting help from their network of informants.

Finally, when the last thug was brought in late in the afternoon on Sunday, the police chief ordered Tsukauchi and Eraserhead to 'get the hell out of here' and go home.

Aizawa groaned, shifting to find a more comfortable position for his muscles, which felt like metal wires. He kicked off his boots

unceremoniously, not caring that Hizashi would chew him out for it later, and breathed a sigh of relief as the tight pinching on his toes was removed. Slowly, one joint at a time, Aizawa let his body relax into the squishy brown couch. Dry eyes closed to the soft city lights coming in through the window, his only warning before soft paws landed on his chest was a quiet 'mreow'. He jolted slightly as Tofu, their creamy-white cat, started kneading at his capture scarf, searching for a spot to curl up on his chest.

The tired hero opened one eye briefly to glare at the cat, but snorted when the animal ignored the intimidating look and settled half in his capture scarf. Closing his itchy black eye and leaning his head back against the arm rest, Aizawa lifted a hand to slowly scratch behind the cat's ears, earning a soft purr for his efforts. "Damn cat…" he muttered, the rhythmic purring lulling him to sleep.

The front door opening woke him some time later. He heard the shuffling of boots against the wood floors and muffled cursing as a dull thud reached Shouta's ears. Lips twitching at the sound of his husband struggling down the hallway, Shouta rolled off the couch, clutching the still sleeping cat to his chest, and padded through the living room towards the front door. Hizashi slowly made his way down the hallway to the kitchen, juggling several full bags of groceries and muttering profanities to himself whenever something fell from the bags.

"Need help?" Shouta asked in his gravelly, sleep deepened voice. Tofu woke from the jostling and noise, jumping down from his arms to investigate the apple that dropped to the floor.

Hizashi jumped, head swiveling rapidly to face the unexpected voice. "SHOU! I DIDN'T REALize you were home!" Shouta quickly erased Hizashi's quirk as the loud blond dropped the rest of the groceries to the floor, causing Tofu to scamper off into their bedroom, and rushed Shouta for an exuberant hug.

The dark-haired man stumbled back slightly at the force of the excitement, but quickly regained his balance, letting his head drop to Hizashi's shoulder and pulling the man into a tight embrace as he released his quirk. The smell of his husband's fruity shampoo soothed him, allowing his shoulders to droop.

"When did you get back? You didn't tell me you were coming home! I would have made sure to be here."

Shouta grunted, “An hour ago? Not sure. Fell asleep.”

Hizashi snorted, pulling back to look him over, green eyes lingering on the obvious tear in Shouta’s sleeve. He gently prodded at the bandage, frowning when Shouta winced.

“You got injured again,” the blond stated.

Shouta sighed, pulling Hizashi’s hand away from the cut. “Hazard of the job. It’s just a graze, anyway. A few stitches and that was it.”

Hard green eyes stared at him unhappily before softening. “If you say so. I just…I don’t like seeing you hurt. Not after the USJ.”

The dark-haired man nodded, memories of the mountain of bandages Hizashi rewrapped for him every morning resurfacing. “I’m fine. It’s barely even a scratch.” Shouta smirked, a light teasing tone entering his still gravelly voice. “No worse than you would have given me if I’d been home, anyway.”

The Voice Hero gasped dramatically and slapped Shouta on the chest, turning in a huff to pick up the fallen groceries. “Absolutely scandalous, Eraserhead! What *will* your fans say when they find out?”

Shouta picked up the remaining grocery bags and followed the exuberant blond into the kitchen. He scoffed, “That I’m right.”

Hizashi shrieked indignantly as they unloaded the purchased food into their pantry, both happy to be together again.

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Aizawa tiredly strode into Meeting Room 4 at the crack of dawn Monday morning. Yellow sleeping bag and coffee mug in hand, he settled into his seat next to Hizashi, grunting a greeting to the other teachers present at the table.

Sipping slowly at the steaming coffee, he zipped himself into the soft bag and settled down for a quick nap before the rest of the teachers arrived. A few minutes passed, the noise in the room muted due to the collective tiredness of all present. Aizawa was about to relax into a deeper nap when he heard Yagi’s voice greet everyone with an excessively energetic, “Good morning!”

Dark, dry eyes cracked open and stared at the number one hero from over the top of his sleeping bag. He snorted quietly. If Aizawa thought

his bag was obnoxiously yellow, it had nothing on the suit Yagi was wearing today. Where did this man take fashion advice from?

“Yagi,” Aizawa grumbled to the skeletal man. When bright blue eyes turned to look at him from deep sockets, Aizawa continued, “Did Midoriya get home on Friday?”

Yagi smiled his famous smile, though the effect was somewhat ruined by his less than healthy physique. “Oh yes! Young Midoriya got home just fine. His mother was there too. I know you wanted to make sure.” The blond hero scratched the back of his head lightly and waved a hand in a dismissive gesture.

Aizawa relaxed minutely, but kept questioning. “So, you saw her at home then? Did anything seem off?”

The blue-eyed man stilled; mouth slightly open as if to answer. Aizawa felt tension rise in his shoulders, not happy with the look on the other man’s face. “Ah, well…you see…”

“Yagi,” Aizawa growled, leaning forward out of his sleeping bag. “What is it?”

All Might slowly answered, a strained grin on his face. “I didn’t actually see Midoriya-san in person…?” His voice pitched upward at the end, making his statement more like a question.

Aizawa stopped breathing, a dark glare pointed at the Foundational Hero Studies teacher. He felt his left eye begin to twitch as his frustration mounted. First the raid going sideways, now this? “You didn’t see her personally?” Aizawa stated slowly, giving each word a pause for emphasis.

Yagi, eyes wide in their sockets and long fingers tapping nervously against his yellow pant leg, managed to keep his voice fairly even in the face of Aizawa’s obvious anger. “Ah, well, no. I didn’t. But Young Midoriya assured me she was home! There was a light on in their window, see…”

“Have you ever been to their home before? Do you know for *sure* that the window was theirs?” Shouta felt Hizashi put a calming hand on his shoulder. His clenched fist was starting to tremble with his rising temper.

Yagi tried to recover from the onslaught of intimidation from Aizawa. “Well, no, Aizawa. But I don’t see any reason why Midoriya would lie

to me about something like that." He leaned forward, a frown on his thin face as concern towards Aizawa's reaction bloomed in his chest.

Aizawa took a deep breath, his voice lowering so he didn't cause a scene right before the weekly staff meeting. "Yagi," he growled, "that kid has been skipping meals for the last week and lying to his friends about it. He lied to me about eating the lunch UA provides on Friday. He lied to me about his mother when I found out her emergency number isn't in service anymore. He's been vomiting frequently and trying to hide it. He's clearly been doing this for longer than I've noticed because he's lost a *significant* amount of weight. More than is probably healthy."

The blond hero's eyes widened more than the black-haired man thought possible, his mouth forming an 'O' as he listened to the Erasure Hero. "I…I didn't realize it was that bad. I saw he was skinnier, but he said his mother had lost her job and only recently found a new position, so they were tight on finances." Yagi paused, thinking. He looked back up at Aizawa. "You don't think he was lying about that too?"

Class 1-A's homeroom teacher sighed, his anger draining out. "I don't know." Hizashi's hand patted his back and retreated. "That could explain what's been going on, but I just…" He ground his teeth, unhappy with the turn of events. "I have a bad feeling."

Yagi was about to respond when Principal Nedzu strolled through the automatically opening door. "Good morning, everyone! I hope your weekends were full of relaxation and preparation for next week's Hero Course Practical Exams! I've sent the suggested student and teacher pairings to your tablets. Please review them now." A simple ping sounded across the array of tablets, making a slight echo in the meeting room.

Aizawa sent Yagi a look that clearly said, 'We'll finish this later,' then turned to look over the notes for the practical exams. The student teams were set up well, pairing students who either didn't work well together, had conflicting quirks, or could learn from each other. Aizawa eyed Midoriya's team hesitantly. Pairing him with Bakugo would force them to work together instead of against each other, certainly, but he wasn't sure they could overcome their differences over the course of a 15-minute exam.

Moving to look at the teacher the duo would be facing, Aizawa immediately spoke into the quiet room, "I don't want Midoriya going

against All Might.”

“Oh?” The principal chirped over his porcelain teacup. “Why so?”

Aizawa felt the curious eyes of the other teachers on him and fought the urge to glare at them. “I highly doubt Midoriya and Bakugo can manage to work together in the time the exam takes, which means they’ll be sitting ducks against any teacher.” He leaned back, looking straight at Yagi. “Against All Might they’ll get pummeled. It won’t even be a contest.”

Across the room, Snipe piped in, “All of the students are outmatched, that’s the point. Why are you concerned about Midoriya and Bakugo specifically?”

Several of the other teachers agreed with Snipe’s comment, turning to Aizawa for an answer. He clenched his fist in irritation, not wanting to air Midoriya’s dirty laundry in front of the whole staff, but knowing he had to. “I have no issue with Bakugo facing All Might; kid has enough self-confidence to pass against any of the teachers. Midoriya’s my concern. He hasn’t been well in the last few weeks. He’s losing weight and vomiting, not to mention skipping meals.”

The other teachers frowned, looking between themselves and back at Aizawa, waiting for someone to speak. Recovery Girl quickly piped in, soft voice cutting through the uncomfortable silence. “I agree with Shouta. Midoriya was very thin when I saw him yesterday. I’m concerned he may have lost too much weight and muscle mass to activate his quirk.”

Aizawa's head snapped towards Recovery Girl. “What do you mean?” It came out fiercer than he meant it, and Aizawa could see the frown on the elderly nurse’s face as she glanced at Yagi. Shouta turned to face the blond instead, waiting for an answer along with the rest of the confused staff.

The number one hero coughed into a handkerchief, trying and failing at subtlety. He glanced around the room, seeing that he'd suddenly become the center of attention. "Ah, um well, Midoriya has a similar quirk to many strength enhancing quirks, unfortunately."

"Meaning?" Aizawa spat, his earlier ire for the man creeping back at the indirect responses and avoidances.

"Meaning," Yagi gulped, "that in order to use the quirk, his body has to handle the backlash. This is done by increasing his own muscle mass

until he can resist the force his quirk exerts." The blond wiped a bit of blood from the corner of his mouth, glancing around at the assembled teachers. "It's...not unlike my quirk, actually. I had to bulk up significantly. If I didn't, I could have blown my own arm off."

Aizawa glowered between Recovery Girl and Yagi, sensing there was something they weren't saying. "So," he started, feeling Hizashi's thumb on his leg rub soothing circles under the table, "if what you're saying is true about Midoriya, he could hurt himself severely just from activating his quirk. Am I getting that right?"

"That's correct, Shouta," Recovery Girl agreed.

"Then I'm even more against him fighting All Might than before. If he can't use his quirk, he'll have to fight Yagi quirkless to not make himself a liability on his team, which will already likely fail because those two can't get along. It would set both of them up for failure with the only other alternative being to send Midoriya to the hospital for a good grade. I won't agree to that." Aizawa crossed his arms tightly over his chest, glaring at any of the teachers who would debate his reasoning. He didn't miss the slight wince from Yagi when he'd said 'quirkless,' and stored the information away for later.

“Hmmm,” the principal closed his eyes and steepled his paws in front of his black nose. “What would you suggest then, Eraserhead?”

Glancing at Recovery Girl for approval, Aizawa stated, “Recovery Girl should look him over today and determine if he’s safe to use his quirk. If he is, he can take the practical, but I would argue to pair him with a different teacher. He and Bakugo need to settle their differences, but not when Midoriya is potentially at a health risk.” Chiyo nodded in agreement, a soft smile playing over her lips as she gripped her walking stick.

Yagi held a large hand up. “I can go easier on them during the practical if Midoriya is cleared for quirk usage. Or we could double the weight so it doesn’t seem like I’m holding back against them.” The blond man laughed humorlessly, “Knowing young Bakugo, he’d take great offense if he thought I wasn’t giving it my all.”

"Maybe," Aizawa mumbled. "I'd still prefer if he fought a different teacher, but that could work." He felt his anger at the man simmering just under the surface, but with Hizashi's soothing presence, it was becoming more manageable. Yagi was in for it after the meeting finished, however.

Nedzu quickly tapped on his tablet, a small smile creeping across the rat's face. He finished typing, turning to look at Aizawa expectantly. "And if Recovery Girl determines Midoriya cannot use his quirk? How will we test him for the practical?"

The dark-haired hero considered for a moment, frowning. Tossing a few ideas around in his head before deciding on one. "He's good with quirkless fighting and strategy. If he can't use his quirk, we have him fight one of the teachers one-on-one where neither party can use their quirk." Aizawa paused, his signature creepy grin stretching across his face. "Since I'm the only one here who fights that way, I'll be his opponent."

Present Mic snorted. "You just want a chance to beat up your students twice, Eraser." Aizawa felt Hizashi's hand squeeze his thigh at the joke and rolled his eyes.

Ectoplasm leaned forward. "That sounds sufficient for his practical. What of Bakugo if Midoriya cannot use his quirk? Will he face All Might alone?"

"That wouldn't be fair to him either," Thirteen interjected. "He should be paired with another student for his exam. Perhaps if another student team fails, we could have one of them volunteer to partner with Bakugo for extra credit?"

"Or we could pair him with Todoroki or Iida after their exams? He doesn't like them either, ya dig," Present Mic suggested, a gloved index finger held up like a raised hand.

The white bear typed rapidly on the screen of his tablet, seeming content by the discussion. "Very well. Are there any opposed to this course of action?" The gathering of teachers all shook their heads in the negative. "Excellent! Aizawa, please ensure Midoriya is taken to Recovery Girl's office sometime today. I'd like to finalize our schedule tomorrow morning. Now, onto Class 1-B…"

Aizawa leaned back, letting Vlad take the lead on his class's teams. He glanced at Hizashi, seeing a small smile and worry in his green eyes. He squeezed the blond's hand in assurance. He was getting to the bottom of whatever Midoriya was hiding. He just hoped the kid would trust him enough to accept his help.

Chapter End Notes

The tags say Parental Yagi Toshinori, so I had to deliver Parental

Yagi Toshinori. And also extend the pain of knowing something is wrong, but not letting Aizawa fix it.

And we get some insight into what happened with Izuku's mom, since I know a lot of you have been screaming at me in the comments haha.

Enjoy! Happy holidays! :)

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku mumbled quietly to himself at his desk near the window in the nearly empty classroom. He hastily worked through the numbers in his notebook, counting up the extra money from his hero merchandise that a very excited 25-year-old purchased from him. Izuku was nervous to meet with someone so much older than him, but the man was clearly more interested in Izuku's merchandise than him, as was made clear when he purchased everything Izuku brought with him. With the sudden influx of money, Izuku needed to rework his finances to determine how many months of rent he had at his disposal.

The green-haired teen continued his muttering while several of the other students entered the room, though Izuku hardly noticed as he was completely absorbed in his work. Only after a few quiet minutes was the silence broken by Kaminari bursting through the door with Ashido in tow.

"It was so scary!" Kaminari yell-whispered. "I thought I was gonna die from proximity! Whoever that Yagi guy was, Aizawa was ripping him a new one!" The electric teen glanced around as if on the lookout for their grumpy homeroom teacher.

Ashido, ever looking for fresh gossip, gasped, "Did you hear what Aizawa was yelling *about*? I don't want to make whatever mistake that guy made!"

"Something about taking something home…I don't know, but I'm sure it was deserved. I've never heard Aizawa be so intimidating or scary!" Izuku looked over at Kaminari as his classmate shuddered. "Don't tell anyone, but I just about peed myself…"

Izuku felt something in his empty stomach tighten. *Aizawa-sensei yelled at All Might about taking me home? No, it must be something else, right? Why would they be talking about me? I'm not worth fighting over. Just a useless deku…*

Ashido cackled and slapped Kaminari on the back. "You wimp! I'm sure it wasn't that bad!"

The two instantly froze when an icy growl shot across the classroom,

“Quiet.”

Kaminari and Ashido yelped as they scampered to their seats. Ashido quietly whimpered, “It’s that bad.”

Izuku turned from his fellow classmates’ stricken expression and faced the front of the room where his surly homeroom teacher stood behind the podium with a steaming black coffee mug. The hero’s dark eyes glanced toward Izuku briefly with an odd expression in them that the teen couldn’t quite discern, before Aizawa-sensei held a stack of papers out to Iida, grumbling, “Class rep. Pass these out.”

Iida, never one to waste his teacher’s time, raced through the room, dropping a paper on each desk before speeding back to his seat. Izuku smiled slightly at his friend’s antics and extremely rigid posture. Out of the corner of his eye he spotted Uraraka giggling into her hand, eyes filled with laughter.

“You’ve heard about the summer camp for weeks now. These are the permission slips. If you don’t get your parent’s signature, you don’t go. Simple as that. Bring these back to me tomorrow morning. I don’t want to remind anyone to get these signed.”

An excited mutter burst through the room at the mention of the summer camp before Aizawa-sensei’s annoyed glare put an end to the noise. “Also, if you don’t pass your practical exam, you don’t go to the summer camp. So,” Aizawa grinned evilly at the students whose eyes had widened at that statement, “better train hard this week.”

The rest of the class Aizawa left open to them to plan their own training, explaining that the gyms would be open all week for them to train during their study hours or hero classes. Izuku immediately shoved his Adult Responsibilities notebook back into his bag and pulled out another he reserved for learning about One for All and his own training. *I need to focus on my power output. Now that I can activate One for All across my whole body, I’m a lot more versatile, but I need to improve my strength if I’m going to be anywhere near All Might’s level. So, strength training, like usual, but maybe I can include some of that parkour stuff Aizawa-sensei was teaching us to train my reflexes and learn how to move throughout city areas better. Did Aizawa-sensei say* all *the gyms were open? Maybe I can go to Ground Beta and practice on those buildings?*

Izuku, with All Might’s All-American Dream Plan memorized long ago, quickly had a meal plan, tailored to his available finances, and workout schedule lined out before most of the other students had even

thought to begin writing down what they wanted to do. Aizawa wandered through the rows of desks, stopping every once in a while to give pointers to some of the students who weren't sure what to do.

Unaware of the mounting irritation in the explosive blond sitting one seat ahead of him, Izuku continued quietly mumbling to himself as he worked through his training for the next week. Finally, Bakugo seemed to reach a breaking point and whirled around, shouting, "Shut the hell up, you damn nerd! I can't think straight with your stupid muttering!"

Izuku jumped at the sudden noise and the two palms that slammed down onto his desk. He froze momentarily, green eyes wide as he stared into the angry face of his childhood friend. He quietly squeaked, "S-sorry, Kaachan!"

Red eyes glared at him, then seemed to really look at him as Bakugo's face turned from rage into confusion. "What the hell is wrong with you, eh? Looking like a damn skeleton."

"Oh, I, uh, nothing! N-nothing, Kaachan!" Izuku waved his hands placatingly and leaned back in his chair, away from Bakugo's imposing form. He felt his chest fluttering with hasty breaths as his muscles locked up.

Bakugo seemed as if he was about to say something, but was interrupted when Aizawa stopped next to their desks. His dark eyes scanned the notebook briefly before grunting, "Got a schedule already, Midoriya? Let's see it then." He held his hand out for the notebook, exuding boredom, but still with that indiscernible expression as he looked straight at Izuku.

Suddenly nervous about having his work critiqued, Izuku stuttered, "Oh! Uh, s-sure, Aizawa-sensei." The notebook was quickly passed to his homeroom teacher as his other hand tapped his pencil against his leg in rhythm with his tapping foot. In front of him, Bakugo huffed and turned back to his own work.

Aizawa hummed as he flipped to the next page, eyes rapidly scanning the page. "The training portion looks fine, Midoriya, but your meal plan isn't right." Aizawa's eyes bore into Izuku wide green ones. "You'll need a lot more food than this if you're hoping to gain some muscle by the end of the week. And protein for almost every meal. You've just got rice and vegetables listed."

Izuku stuttered something about fixing it as Aizawa laid the notebook

back on the desk and pointed to a section. “Same for your parkour days. It’s a full-body workout to run around and climb buildings. You’ll want to plan *more* food for those days than your strength training, not less.”

“Y-yes, sensei!” He hurriedly erased several of the meals, writing in options with plenty of eggs and occasional meat. He supposed sacrificing a little money for extra food this week in order to pass his exams would be fine. He just needed to be on the hunt for a job a little sooner and eat sparingly next week.

Aizawa glanced at the meal replacements with a critical eye before turning to move up the line of desks. “Don’t forget to change the other days, Midoriya.”

The rest of the morning passed in typical fashion: Present Mic strutting into the class with a loud “Good MORNING, listeners!” in English, Uraraka and Iida sitting around his desk during study hour to talk over their training plan, Uraraka worrying over the scar from his concussion, and Aizawa nearly giving everyone a heart attack when announcing the results of their regular exams before lunch.

Uraraka pumped her fist into the air when the lunch bell rang. “We all passed! That’s such a relief!” She slumped into Bakugo’s vacated desk. “Now we get to stress about the practical,” she groaned. “I wonder what it’ll be? Do you think they’ll use the robots from the entrance exam?”

Iida cleared his throat as his back straightened in preparation for a speech. “I doubt such a prestigious school would use the same tactics for two exams in a row! Especially when they were used in the Sports Festival as well. I expect the practical exams will be something heretofore unseen to test our abilities fully!”

“Yeah, I-I bet it’ll be something more like our battle training! Something to t-test our training, but a-also our tactics.” Izuku quickly packed away his notebooks, making sure to pull out his bento in plain view of Aizawa. The teen was sure the man would be looking and wanted to avoid another unnecessary conversation about his lunch or lack thereof. Izuku was sure he couldn’t afford Lunch Rush’s delicious meals as often as Aizawa would insist he eat them. Nevermind if the food would actually stay down. Even his regular meals were starting to turn his stomach.

The trio were just about to walk through the enormous door to 1-A

when Aizawa-sensei's bored voice called, "Midoriya. Come talk to me."

The green-eyed boy sighed internally, then turned to his friends' concerned faces. "I'll m-meet up with you for lunch. Same s-spot by the field?" The other two both smiled and nodded, then moved out the door. Uraraka's concerned face continued to watch him as they left.

Izuku shuffled up to Aizawa clutching his bento like a lifeline. His stomach growled loudly as he smiled nervously up at his teacher, wishing he knew what the dark man was going to say. Aizawa motioned for Izuku to follow him out the door. "You brought lunch? Good, bring it with you."

The much shorter teen stumbled after the pro hero as they sped through the hallways away from the lunchroom and the general chaos of the student body. "Um, A-Aizawa-sensei? Wh-where are we g-going?"

The older man noticed the teen struggling to keep up with his longer strides and slowed. "Recovery Girl. I need you cleared to take the practical exam after that concussion last week."

Izuku swallowed around a large lump in his throat, feeling butterflies in his stomach. He hurried to keep pace with the dark-haired man, his bottom lip firmly between his teeth. Izuku really wasn't sure why the teacher was interested in his welfare seemingly out of nowhere. Izuku felt, as he'd been taught by his mother's actions and the other kids at school, that he was barely average and not worth the attention paid to him. Regardless of Aizawa's status as his favorite teacher—baring All Might, who was more of a personal mentor to him—Izuku was very far beneath his homeroom teacher's notice.

*Kaachan should be who Aizawa-sensei is watching out for. He'll be such a good hero someday. He deserves the special treatment. Not like me. Just a worthless deku…*

"I-I'm doing fine, Aizawa-sensei. My head stopped h-hurting after I s-slept. I s-should be fine to take the p-practical exam." Izuku stammered, knowing that changing the hero's mind was near impossible, but hoping the man would see that Izuku wasn't worth the hassle of a check-up.

The man hummed as he held the door to the infirmary open for Izuku, dark eyes boring into his own. "You'll forgive me if I prefer the word of a trained medical professional."

Izuku felt his face heat up, freckled cheeks turning red at the dismissal. Aizawa led him to the same room he was treated for his concussion in and left him sitting on the cot as he went to search for Recovery Girl. Green eyes stared blankly around the room, feeling a quiet unease as he considered his situation.

Something about skipping lunch caused Aizawa to treat him differently, but Izuku couldn't nail down an exact reason for *why*. None of the teachers in his previous schools cared even a little if Izuku missed lunch, often scheduling detention *during* lunch so Izuku had no time to eat.

*Is he actually concerned about me missing meals?* Izuku doubted it, guessing there had to be some other motive. Skipping meals in itself wasn't anything to write home about, but he supposed the sunken cheeks he was now sporting were cause for concern if even *Kaachan* had noticed.

Izuku swung his boot-clad feet back and forth as he thought, noting that it was taking some time for Aizawa to return with Recovery Girl. *She must be busy. I'm fine really, there's no need for her to waste time on me when there's someone who actually deserves her help.*

"Alright, Midoriya," a warm, old voice called from where Aizawa had disappeared. "Let's get you weighed, then we can do the rest of the physical."

Izuku hopped off the stiff cot quickly, leaving his backpack on a chair and walking over to the scale Recovery Girl stood by. Aizawa leaned against the wall a short distance away, arms crossed over his chest and looking bored.

"Shoes off, dear," Recovery Girl requested, standing near the digital readout and motioning to the scale. Izuku hastily toed off his boots, feeling embarrassed at the state of his ratty socks, and stepped onto the cold metal with a silent prayer that nothing would concern either of them.

Recovery Girl gave no indication on if the reading was good or bad, only marking down the number on her clipboard and moving so she could pat the top of his cot. "You can put your shoes back on, and hop up here, if you would, young man."

The rest of the physical went as Izuku expected, testing reflexes, blood pressure, and temperature. Recovery Girl also ran him through a series of strength tests, which Izuku couldn't remember ever doing before in

a physical exam. By the time they were done, lunch was nearly over and Izuku was sweating in the gym uniform they gave him.

Aizawa looked him over after Recovery Girl went in the back, that odd look in his eye again. “Go ahead and change, then eat your lunch, kid. I’ll be back in a minute to take you to class.” He lazily strode in the direction Recovery Girl disappeared to, leaving Izuku alone with his thoughts once again.

Izuku stared after the pair confused, feeling the strangeness of the situation settle around his chest. Biting his lip in hesitation, he quickly changed out of the gym clothes and stiffly made his way to the microwave Aizawa gestured at, slowly punching in the numbers to heat his plain rice and steamed vegetables.

Brow furrowed in thought, Izuku felt his gut clench as a wave of anxiety rose up within him causing his breaths to shallow and increase in speed. *That was strange. Why did they need to do all this?*

The microwave beeped happily at him, a stark contrast from his internal feeling of dread. With shaking hands, Izuku pulled out the warm bento, quickly sitting down in a nearby chair to shovel the food into his mouth. Anything to keep his mind busy.

In his anxious thoughts, he reverted to his far less confident self. *Why does he care? I’m not that important. I’m just a worthless deku who doesn’t deserve to be here. I had to get a quirk from someone else to even make it into the hero course!*

The part of Izuku that slowly gained self-confidence over the last several months, the part that would have argued that Aizawa cared because Izuku was his student, and it was his job to care, was silent in the wake of the growing panic attack.

*There’s nothing wrong. Mom’s coming home soon. It’s not like Aizawa found out—No,* his mind rebelled against the wave of panicked thoughts. *There’s nothing to find out. Nothing. Is. Wrong. I’ll just be alone for awhile…until…*

The anxiety vanished in an instant. An ache formed in his chest that threatened to spill tears from his verdant eyes. He gazed down at the bento in his hand, one he bought from the gas station down the road because the one he used since elementary school disappeared along with most of the cooking utensils, furniture, and pictures while he was interning with Gran Torino.

Any appetite Izuku had at the beginning of the lunch period was gone, replaced with a heavy heart and clenched gut. Teeth sinking into a plump lip, he quietly placed the lid over the half-eaten lunch and slid it into his backpack. It didn't matter anyway. It probably wouldn't stay down for long.

Izuku leaned forward, shoulders hunched, and clasped his hands together as he attempted to hold the tears at bay. He thought the last of his tears were shed over the course of the weekend, but clearly his body was betraying him as his vision became blurry in the middle of the infirmary. The sharp bite of his nails dug into his palms, and he sucked several shaky breaths.

*Everything is fine. Just calm down, stupid deku!*

"Thank you, Chiyo. I'll let them know." Aizawa strode into the room, footsteps only audible because he wanted them to be, Izuku knew. The man could pass a motion sensor undetected. Black boots stopped next to Izuku's yellow backpack. "Ready to go, Midoriya? Did you eat?"

Wiping his eyes on his sleeve, Izuku stood from the cot and quickly swept his bag up from the floor, avoiding looking up at Aizawa. "Y-yes, sensei," he mumbled in a quavering voice. He sniffed slightly as he turned to walk to the exit.

"Kid." Aizawa put a hand on his shoulder, causing Izuku to tense briefly, not expecting the physical contact, before relaxing at the comforting touch. He simultaneously wanted to lean into the warm hand and move away from it, knowing his teacher wouldn't want to touch a useless student like him.

Aizawa walked around the green-haired teen until he could look into Izuku's freckled face. "Are you alright?" The tenderness in his teacher's voice caught Izuku off-guard enough to stare up at his teacher. Dark eyes peered into watery green ones, none of the usual ire and boredom present in his expression, only that strange look he'd been giving Izuku all day.

Swallowing heavily, Izuku tried to smile his usual bright smile, though the effect was lessened by the redness in his eyes. "I-I'm fine, sensei," he stuttered out, breath catching several times as he fought to keep the tears at bay.

Aizawa frowned, seeming to sense Izuku's lie, but he didn't appear to be upset with the teen as Izuku had expected. "Midoriya," Aizawa murmured, voice gentle, "if something is wrong you can talk to me.

You know that, right?"

Izuku opened his mouth to respond, but was momentarily stunned. Where had this side of his cranky teacher come from? "I-I'm fine, I p-promise, sensei. J-just stressed ab-bout the practical e-exam, is all." He glanced back down to his red boots, hands moving to clench tightly on the straps of his backpack.

The large hand on his shoulder squeezed slightly in assurance as Aizawa continued to watch his face, his dark eyes serious. "You can tell me anything, Midoriya. Anything."

Izuku nodded, still looking at his shoes. He heard Aizawa sigh, "Alright. Do you need a minute before we go back to class?" Green curls bounced as Izuku shook his head vigorously in the negative, wanting to leave the infirmary as quickly as possible and get back to normalcy.

"Let's go, then." Aizawa led him out of the infirmary, warm arm around his shoulders until they were out in the sunshine again. Izuku felt the absence of the comforting touch as soon as it was gone, leaving him with a deep sense of longing. He desperately wanted a hug.

When they returned to the classroom, Uraraka immediately ran up to his side, concern washing over her face as she saw his red eyes. "Deku! What happened? We didn't see you anywhere for lunch!"

Izuku flinched at her words. Her brown eyes grew even more concerned, so Izuku quickly alleviated her worries by explaining the check-up for his concussion. The brown-haired girl still looked troubled by the clear evidence of tears, but refrained from asking as the bell rang to signal the start of class.

The rest of the day was spent in personal training under the supervision of Aizawa, All Might, and Vlad King. Izuku quickly found a spot by the weights next to Kirishima, Sato, and Tetsutetsu from 1-B, all four quickly working up a "manly sweat" as Kirishima and Tetsutetsu were calling it. Izuku felt his own disappointment deeply when he realized he had to lift smaller weights than before, and he was reaching fatigue much faster. His arms shook every time he lifted the weights, and he gasped for breath after each set.

*Come on! You can do better than this! You* have *to do better than this!*

When Aizawa called for everyone to get cleaned up, Izuku slumped

with a great sense of relief, wondering if he'd perhaps planned too much for his training this week as his weak muscles slowly pushed his body up from the bench. He changed out of his gym clothes quickly, trying to ignore the sideways glances Bakugo shot at him, and rushed out the door as soon as the final bell rang.

He was out of the gym so fast, he didn't notice Aizawa and All Might staring after him.

Aizawa grunted, "Recovery Girl said no quirk usage. His strength is down significantly. Honestly, I'm surprised I didn't notice before." Internally, he was kicking himself. He prided himself on his observation skills, but he missed something so obvious right in front of him.

All Might watched Midoriya sadly as he nearly sprinted out the door. "I agree. If he uses his quirk now, he could lose a limb." The last student exited the building and All Might deflated to his skeletal self. "I need to apologize, Aizawa. I should have noticed something sooner and taken your request more seriously on Friday." Yagi's deep-set blue eyes frowned at the ground, a troubled expression on his face.

The Erasure Hero glanced at Yagi from the corner of his eye, sighing and thinking back to this morning where he'd shouted at Yagi for thirty minutes and hadn't let the man get a word in. "It's fine, Yagi. I didn't have time to explain. I shouldn't have gone off on you like that." Aizawa sighed, then gestured for the door.

Yagi nodded at Aizawa as he locked up the gym and each departed for their own offices, mulling over the problem that was Midoriya Izuku.

Chapter End Notes

> We get to see Aizawa's side of things today, and inch ever closer to him finding out what's going on with Midoriya!
>
> On another note, the response to the last chapter was amazing! You guys are awesome and make my day with all the kudos and comments. Thank you so much. :D
>
> Hope everyone had a great holiday season! Enjoy the chapter. :)
>
> EDIT: Evilkat23 had a very fair point, and that was that Aizawa would have no idea about Midoriya's quirk activation requirements. You know, blowing his own limbs off if he isn't STRONK. So, I have gone through and updated the chapter to fix

that issue. And as a plus I was able to incorporate some Aizawa-figures-out-Midoriya's-quirk-status foreshadowing in there. So thanks Evilkat23 for the critique! I appreciate it. :)

There was also another comment from WildInkling regarding how much weight Izuku has lost and how that would be a major red flag for any medical professional, and Recovery Girl definitely should have told Aizawa that something was very badly wrong. As the amount of weight Izuku has lost is spread across multiple chapters, I'll have to take a little longer to fix that particular issue. But I will fix it! I want this story to be the best it can be, so thank you for the comments. :)

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku swayed with exhaustion as he shoved his cheap bento into the microwave in his bare kitchen. The dingy white wallpaper made the empty counters feel old and decrepit where it had once felt welcoming and warm. The ancient microwave dinged loudly in the stillness of the house, causing the lone occupant to startle. Seeing only the red numbers on the microwave timer blinking '0:00' happily at him, Izuku shook his head at his own jumpiness before gently opening the microwave door and pulling out his bento. The cheap box's materials being what they were, the heat from the rice and vegetables seeped through the plastic quickly, warming the entire thing beyond comfortable levels. He gingerly shifted the box from hand to hand to avoid burning his fingers while he fast-walked to the other side of the kitchen.

Setting the steaming food down next to his notebook, Izuku blew on his fingertips to cool them before sitting at the laminated countertop. He leaned forward, elbows holding him upright as he slowly picked through the remains of lunch and glanced over his budget. Today was exhausting, both physically and emotionally, and he felt no motivation for anything he had to do this evening. His dull green eyes slowly moved down each line of his budget, wishing he could just curl up in bed and forget about everything for a day. Unfortunately, Izuku knew he had homework, budget, and his training plan to finish, and he had to cook lunch for tomorrow.

Sighing tiredly, the greenette finished his rice, though he struggled to get it down, and pushed the flimsy plastic box away. Reaching for his pencil case with a scarred hand, Izuku settled in for the several hours of work ahead of him. *Budget first*, he thought and pulled the relevant notebook towards him. It took him a half hour to satisfactorily organize his expenses and another hour to lay out the multitude of budget plans he could use. *So, if I want to eat normally, meaning three meals a day, I can get three months out of my current funds. But, if I skip one meal a day, I can stretch that out to four and a half months. Six months if I only eat once a day. That's not ideal, but I could make it work. I won't be starving at any rate…*

The storm of thoughts continued as he wrote out each budget on a

separate sheet, then used stickers from an old hero coloring book he'd found shoved under his bed as tab markers. A cartoon All Might, Crimson Riot, and Endeavor were folded over the edge of his three plans respectively. *I'll stick with two meals a day, the Crimson Riot plan, until I can see how difficult getting a job will be. If I can find one quickly, then everything goes back to normal, to the All Might plan. If not, I need to switch to plan Endeavor.*

Izuku inwardly hoped it wouldn't come to the Endeavor plan. It was difficult enough to fly under Aizawa-sensei's radar with only skipping one meal a day, let alone two. The man was already asking questions Izuku couldn't answer.

Flipping 'Adult Responsibilities for the Present' closed and shoving it across the counter, Izuku took a moment to stretch, rolling his stiff shoulders and pressing his thumb into the cramping muscles of his right hand. He was used to the ache in his heavily scarred hand, but it still bothered him on nights like tonight when he had so much writing to do.

He glanced at the microwave for the time, then looked out the sliding doors in the empty living room to watch the lights of Musutafu. The lights twinkling through his third story apartment building window looking as they always had, uncaring of how different Izuku's world had become under their gaze. Green hair bounced as he roughly shook the thoughts from his head, gripping his pencil again and beginning his math assignment. Of course no one cared. There were thousands of people in this city, and he was just a worthless deku in a tiny apartment in the boring part of Musutafu, waiting for his mother to come home

The math worksheet took very little time, Izuku understanding the concepts very well from his studies. He quickly moved to Yamada-sensei's assignment, finishing the one-page short story, written entirely in English, rather quickly and writing a joke he'd heard from All Might, also in English, at the bottom for Present Mic. Finally, he arrived at his last assignment, the parent signature for approval to go to summer camp. Izuku read through the sheet carefully, noting that there was simply a "Yes or no" checkbox and a line for a signature.

He bit his lip, staring at the blank signature line and wishing that these were handed out earlier in the year. He wanted desperately to attend the summer camp, not just for the training and quirk practice Aizawa had mentioned, but also for the chance to see his friends outside of the typical school setting. He was just about to sign his

mother's name on the line when his hand paused. *I…don't actually know what her signature looks like.*

Izuku felt the beginnings of a panic building as he thought about his predicament. On one hand, his mother wasn't here and couldn't possibly sign the form. On the other, he wasn't sure if he could forge a passable version of her signature without an example. *What if…what if I fake her signature and the school finds out? I'd be lying on official school paperwork, which could definitely be considered a crime! I'll probably be expelled!*

Izuku's breathing increased rapidly as he held the black pen over the blank line, scarred hand shaking badly. His eyes blew wide as his heart began beating against his ribcage. *I…I can't be expelled! All Might is relying on me to finish my studies at UA to take over as the next Symbol of Peace! If I get expelled, he'll be so disappointed and he'll ask for his quirk back, I know it! And then,* a dark thought crept into his mind, *I'll be quirkless again.*

The green-haired teen slammed the pen down on the counter and sprinted into what used to be his mother's room. The carpet still showed indents where her bedframe was, as well as the nightstand and dresser. The room was bare now, but Izuku still rushed to the open closet, hoping *something, anything* was left. A receipt, or a voided check, maybe even the lease agreement for the apartment, Izuku didn't care. The initial search raised nothing, so Izuku dragged the kitchen chair into the room to look over the upper shelf. Standing on the chair, his green hair brushed the top of the closet and cast a curly shadow from the light in the ceiling. Nothing. Just a fine layer of dust and a faint outline of where his mother's boxed files used to be.

Izuku felt like his heart was going to beat out of his chest. He *had* to make it look like his mom signed the paper, otherwise he would be expelled for lying on a school form. And the paper had to be signed whether he was allowed to go to summer camp or not. He was stuck either way.

Dragging the wooden chair behind him, Izuku dashed down the hallway into his room, the legs of the chair making a horrible screech against the wooden flooring. He immediately began tearing through his own closet, breathing fast and shallow as he leafed through all his old notebooks, hoping he kept a receipt from some toy his mom bought him years ago. After a half hour searching through what remained of his possessions, the panicking boy slumped against the worn cabinets in the kitchen, clutching his last hope. His heart ached

as he looked down at the perfectly folded note. His own name written across the outside of the folded sheet of paper, Izuku carefully opened the note his mother had left him. Though he had long ago memorized the words on the paper, he still held a shred of hope for the impossible. There, at the bottom of the page, was his mother's final farewell. *Goodbye Izuku. Love, Mom.*

Though Izuku knew the signature wasn't there when he opened the note, he still felt himself break at the sight. No signature for him to use. Just 'Mom.' Tears streamed from verdant eyes as the exhausted and overwrought teen gave into the mounting tension and anxiety. The pristine note slipped from his shaking hand, skating across the floor to settle next to the refrigerator with the soft whisper of paper on wooden flooring. His gut-wrenching sobs echoed in the empty house, reverberating off the smooth surfaces in the kitchen and the empty walls.

Curling his knees up to his chest, Izuku felt himself sinking into the misery that was floating around for weeks. In some deep part of his mind, he was angry at these constant shows of weakness. A voice that sounded suspiciously like Kaachan's barked at him in his mind. *Quit crying like a baby, deku!*

Izuku felt small again. Timid and unable to defend himself. He wrapped his arms around his torso tightly, pulling his legs to his chest and hiding his face in his knees. He shuddered with each breath, trying and failing to calm himself as he rubbed his thumbs across the skin of his upper arms.

*I'm going to be expelled and All Might will hate me and take his quirk back and I'll just be worthless, quirkless deku again.*

The sound of his phone buzzing against the kitchen counter pulled him out of his own mind enough to wipe his tear-soaked face and stand on shaky legs. He reached to pick up his phone, watery green eyes scanning the contact information. *Ito-san,* it read. Izuku frowned and sniffed heavily, quickly wiping his leaking nose on his sleeve when no other options were in reach. Hoping his voice would remain steady, Izuku hit the green button and held the phone up to his ear.

"M-Midoriya Izuku s-speaking."

"Midoriya-kun!" The voice of his mother's landlady, well *his* landlady now, crackled happily across the connection. "I was starting to get worried! I've been trying to call your mother all day, but her phone

says it's disconnected?"

Izuku cleared his throat to answer as he walked into the bathroom to grab a tissue. "Oh, yes, s-sorry, Ito-san. She l-lost her ph-phone and had to get a n-new n-number." He muted his phone as he blew his nose, using a fresh tissue to wipe as his red, splotchy face.

"Oh! That's okay then. I just wanted to ask if either of you could help out Tanaka-san next door in 361? He had an emergency surgery yesterday and needs someone to help bring his mail and groceries in until his daughter arrives on Wednesday."

Relaxing at the benign request, Izuku immediately replied, "Y-yes, we can h-help with th-that. J-just until Wednesday?"

"Yep!" The older woman popped the 'p' like bubble gum. "Thank you so much, Midoriya-kun! Will you have your mother call me when she gets her new number? I need it for my records."

Izuku, feeling calmer and hit with a sudden solution to his problem, immediately assured Ito-san that he would. "Of course. Oh, and, um, Ito-san? M-my mom wanted me t-to see if…um…you c-could make a c-copy of the…um…lease agreement?" The green-haired teen felt awful lying to his nice landlady, but his eyes landed on the approval form as he walked back into the kitchen and his resolved hardened. "M-mom spilled t-tea on our copy wh-when she had it out l-last week, and we c-can't read it anymore."

Ito-san laughed easily, voice full of humor, "Can do, Midoriya-kun. I'll drop it off tomorrow morning in your mailbox."

Izuku thanked her profusely, body subconsciously moving into a small bow as he did. The two said their goodbyes and the call ended. Phone limp in his hand, Izuku stared into the kitchen, eyes wide and unable to believe his luck. He quickly rushed over to the counter, putting away his notebooks neatly and sliding the unsigned permission slip into his folder. *I can sign this tomorrow*, he thought. *I just have to…*He gulped as he placed the only remaining kitchen pot on the stovetop and lit the gas burner. *I have to lie to Aizawa again.*

The thought gave him pause, but he quickly shook the thought from his head as he washed a cup of rice in the sink. The man was intimidating, and Izuku was fairly sure Aizawa-sensei could tell when he was lying, though he'd never called it out, but the teen couldn't be worried about that now. His secret would remain known only to himself, and that was what mattered.

*Besides,* Izuku thought as he poured rice into the pot and covered it with water, *why would Aizawa-sensei care about his useless student forgetting a form?*

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Aizawa Shouta yawned tiredly as he and Hizashi left the staff meeting ten minutes before the first bell was due to ring. The meeting was relatively painless, only finalizing some logistics for the hero course exams next week. The other teachers were concerned when Recovery Girl announced that Midoriya would not be allowed to use his quirk for the final, Yagi had the most concerned reaction of all the gathered pros. Aizawa just barely caught the man muttering, “How did I not notice…?” before Nedzu changed the topic and the room filled with discussion again.

“So, how’s green bean doing?” Hizashi’s eyes showed concern behind the yellow lenses as the pair walked from Meeting Room 5 to their homerooms.

Shouta sighed, wishing they could have had this conversation in the privacy of their home, but Hizashi was working at the station all last night. “Physically? Poorly. He’s still too thin, and Recovery Girl thinks he may be lacking iron in his diet based on how pale his skin is, which isn’t really a surprise.”

The Voice Hero frowned as they strode down the hall, passing a few of the older students as they rushed to the stairs. “Poor little listener. Any idea what’s going on yet? Other than not eating, I mean.”

Shouta shook his head, gritting his teeth at the irritation of knowing something was wrong, but being unable to act on it. “No. I can’t tell if he’s sick or something else. He’s trying very hard to hide whatever it is, but it’s obvious he’s lying when you know what to look for.”

Hizashi hummed uneasily as they turned into the first-year business support class corridor, students all rushing into their classrooms as the five-minute warning bell echoed through the halls. They walked in silence until they reached the general education and hero course hallway. Hizashi stopped just around the corner from Class 1-C’s large door. He smiled at sadly at Shouta, trying to ease the worry clouding the other man’s face. “I know you’ll figure out what’s going on, Shou. Midoriya looks up to you, and he trusts you. I’m sure it’s just a matter of time.”

“Time that could be spent fixing whatever is wrong,” Shouta

grumbled, but smiled slightly at his husband as he turned to stride down the hallway. “I’ll see you after class.”

Aizawa stepped through the giant door into Class 1-A at the exact moment the final bell rang. Down the hall, he heard, “MORNING, listeners!”

Sliding the door shut behind him, the dark-haired hero grunted, “Pass up your summer camp permission slips.”

The ruffle of papers handed up the rows of desks was the only sound until Kaminari raised his hand. “Um, sensei? I forgot mine at home. It’s signed and everything! Can I bring it tomorrow?”

Aizawa glared at the blond student before sighing for effect and growling, “Have it ready first thing tomorrow morning.”

Kaminari squawked a quick, “Yes, sir!” before ducking his head down and sending a nervous smile and a thumbs up to Ashido, who giggled back at him from behind her pink hand. Iida quickly gathered the papers from the head of each row and delivered the stack to Aizawa at the podium before zipping back to his seat. Shuffling through the stack of papers quickly, he counted eighteen slips and didn’t see Midoriya’s name in the pile.

“Midoriya,” he called, eyes gazing at the green-haired teen over the stack of permission slips. The nervous kid bit his lip and looked back at him with wide veridian eyes. Aizawa hated the fearful look the teen was giving him. He softened his gaze slightly, stating, “I don’t see yours in here.”

Midoriya’s faltering voice spoke up. “S-sorry, Aizawa-sensei. M-my mom had to w-work a double sh-shift last night and w-wasn’t home t-to s-sign it.”

Noting the increased stuttering, Aizawa held eye-contact with the nervous student a moment longer, wishing he had a mind-reading quirk so he would finally know what was going on under the mop of green hair. “Can she sign it by tomorrow morning?”

Midoriya nodded vigorously. “Y-yes, sensei.”

Aizawa nodded, letting the conversation go even as he internally questioned how frequently Midoriya was left alone when his mother ‘worked a double shift.’ His gut told him it was often.

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Eraserhead watched his students taking their practical exams on the large viewscreens in the control room for the uninhabited city training area designated for Class 1-A's and 1-B's practical exams. He opted to move Todoroki's and Yaoyorozu's exams to be first so he could observe the other exams and also keep Bakugo from flying at Midoriya in a rage. When the teachers announced how everyone was to be tested, it became painfully obvious that Bakugo should have been paired with Midoriya to fight All Might, and the explosive blond immediately turned to yell at the green-haired teen. All Might was able to keep the pair away from each other while Aizawa tested Todoroki and Yaoyarozu, but he wanted to ensure Bakugo wouldn't explode angrily during the rest of the exams as the tension was sure to build up to Bakugo's own battle.

Midoriya, as a counterpoint to Bakugo, seemed to shrink in on himself enough to merge with the back corner. The teen sent a quizzical look to Aizawa when his test was explained, but appeared relieved that Bakugo would not be paired with him.

Eraserhead glanced at the back-right corner Midoriya was curled up in when he heard the boy muttering quietly.

"…maybe Kaminari should work some sort of grounding wire into his costume so he doesn't short circuit as often? He could incorporate it into the collar of his jacket so it keeps his brain from being fried. Or maybe he could get some sort of conductive support weapon like a whip that he can use to control where his Indiscriminate Shock goes but then it probably shouldn't be called Indiscriminate Shock anymore since he can control the direction and I suppose…"

A growl from Aizawa's left immediately had him preparing to erase Bakugo's quirk should the kid start exploding. He looked over at the fuming blond to see Bakugo stomp towards Midoriya. "Damn it, nerd! Already messed up my exam, and now you can't even keep quiet to let me concentrate!" A small spark lit up Bakugo's palm as he crowded his shorter classmate into the corner.

Midoriya's eyes grew wide and he shrank away from the sharp popping sound of Bakugo's quirk. "S-sorry, Kaachan! I'll b-be quiet!"

Aizawa frowned at the defensive way Midoriya held up his hands, as if to ward off a blow. Eyes glowing red and hair lifting off his shoulders, he glared at Bakugo. The teen whirled around, bright fury across his

face. “What the hell is that for?!” He yelled angrily, his stance aggressive.

“Bakugo,” Eraserhead said, voice low with a terrifying calm. “You can use your quirk during your exam, but not before and not after. If I have to erase your quirk again in this room, I’m failing you.”

The explosive blond looked like he was about to argue, but clamped his mouth tightly with a huff. Angry red eyes sent a piercing glare to the smaller teen in the corner before the blond stomped back to his own corner.

Aizawa watched Bakugo for a moment more to ensure he wasn’t about to blow a gasket again, then turned to the green-haired teen. “Midoriya, tell me what a grounding wire would do for Kaminari.”

The nervous boy glanced between Aizawa and Bakugo quickly several times while he bit his bottom lip hard. Stepping out of the tight corner he’d squished himself in, Midoriya tentatively tiptoed towards the viewscreens, wringing his white-gloved hands in front of his thin chest. “Oh, uh, w-well I was th-thinking that Kaminari’s quirk seems to g-generate electricity, n-not control it. S-so, if he had a g-grounding wire in his costume, that would help keep th-the shock from traveling through his body a-and short-circuiting him?”

The Erasure Hero quirked an eyebrow at the response, impressed that Midoriya was able to pick up on the minutia of Kaminari’s quirk. “That’s a good suggestion. Have you ever mentioned it to him?”

Midoriya immediately began waving his hands in front of him in a placating gesture. “O-oh no! I-I wouldn’t want to tell him h-how to make his c-costume! A-and I’m sure he’s a-already thought about it anyway!”

Bakugo grumbled from Aizawa’s right, “He hasn’t, nerd.”

The green-eyed hero student bit his lip as he looked between Bakugo’s unhappy expression and Aizawa’s approving one. Turning red in his freckled cheeks, Midoriya muttered, “I-I’ll maybe suggest it then…”

The Erasure Hero nodded, turning back to the viewscreen in time to see Kaminari and Ashido fail their exam against UA’s principal. He couldn’t say he was surprised. Nedzu’s strategy was impeccable, as always. Soon, the rest of the class’ exams finished, leaving Sero, Sato, Kirishima, Kaminari, and Ashido as the only students to fail their practical exam. Aizawa was proud of all his students, even those that

hadn't succeeded. They did well, and he was more than aware of the hard work they put into their training. He didn't show that, of course. He had a reputation to keep.

As the uninjured students came back into the viewing area, Aizawa congratulated those who passed and turned to the five students who had failed. "You five have one more chance to pass the final. If you volunteer to partner with Bakugo against All Might and succeed, you will earn a passing grade on the final. So," Aizawa grinned widely at the five miserable faces, "who's going to volunteer?"

Ashido, Sato, and Sero all looked nervously over at All Might standing in the corner waving at them with his double weights and immediately shook their heads no, stepping back into the crowd of students. Aizawa looked at Kaminari and Kirishima, one eyebrow lifted in question. The two boys eyed each other eagerly.

"Rock, paper, scissors?" Kirishima suggested, scratching his cement dust-caked head. Kaminari agreed and the two battled an intense best-of-three game before Kirishima came out on top.

"Alright, Bakubro! Let's do this!" The redhaired teen punched his fist into his other hand, activating his hardening quirk as he did.

Bakugo glared at Kirishima, then turned to walk out the door towards the arena. "Whatever, shitty hair. Let's get this over with."

Aizawa motioned for Midoriya to follow him as he and All Might followed the two students towards the cityscape. As they walked into the center of the city, Aizawa stayed slightly behind Bakugo and Kirishima as the two attempted to talk strategy. Barely audible behind him, he heard All Might cautioning Midoriya, "I know Aizawa told you this would be a quirkless battle, but it's a little more than that. Remember what I told you about blowing your limbs off? Recovery Girl is concerned that may be a possibility, so I need you to be very careful about *not* using One for All, Young Midoriya."

"Is that why I'm not with Bakugo fighting you? You don't think I'm strong enough to use One for All anymore?" Aizawa could hear the boy's panic in his muted voice and cursed Yagi for his tactless approach.

"I just want to be cautious. I'm worried about the amount of weight you're losing, but that's a topic for another day. Just don't use your quirk in the exam, alright young man? We can talk more about this when your exam is over."

Aizawa sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. He knew he should have talked to Midoriya himself about the dangers of using his quirk right now, but he foolishly believed Yagi when he said it would be better if he did. And what was all this about One for All? Is that Midoriya's quirk? He remembered seeing the teen's quirk labeled unhelpfully as 'Super Power' in the kid's file.

"All Might," he called when they'd reached the right zone. "This is you."

Kirishima and Bakugo stopped talking and turned to face All Might as the smiling hero nodded at Eraserhead. Both boys had hard determination written over their faces as they stared down the number one hero.

Motioning to Midoriya to follow but speaking to the hero student team, Aizawa said, "Once you hear the bell, you have thirty seconds to move away before All Might is allowed to come after you. If you mount an attack right away, that thirty seconds is removed."

As Aizawa led Midoriya further into the city to get a good distance away from what the dark-haired man assumed would be a highly destructive fight, he heard the teen call a nervous, "Good luck!" to his fellow students. No answer followed as the Erasure Hero and Izuku were swallowed by the city. The pair wound their way to another section of the massive arena, and Aizawa could feel the anxiety radiating off the green bean behind him. *God, Hizashi's bad habits are rubbing off on me.*

Stepping out into a decently wide street, Eraserhead stopped in the center and pulled his yellow goggles up from around his neck, securing them around his face as he turned to look at the teen wringing his gloved hands.

"Same rules apply," he stated. "Escape through the gate or capture me to win. You have thirty seconds after the bell before I can move. No quirk usage allowed." He shoved his hands into the deep pockets of his costume, exuding an air of confident boredom.

Midoriya's green eyes widened, then narrowed as a fierce determination washed across his face. *This kid…*

The two waited in silence for several seconds before the buzzer sounded across the city from hundreds of hidden speakerphones. Deku took off to the right, disappearing in the mess of houses immediately. Eraserhead smirked. *So, it's a chase, then.*

He waited patiently; ears pricked for the sound of the kid's bright red boots on concrete. A soft buzz in his earpiece let him know the handicap time was up, and he bolted for the nearest building, capture weapon flying out to lift him onto the roof.

His black hair whipping backward from the speed of his flight, Eraserhead quickly started scanning the streets below him for signs of the teen's passage. He rolled into a landing on a lower building, momentum carrying him to his feet again as he sprinted over the flat roof. He judged he would have the advantage over Deku in terms of distance due to his capture weapon acting as a sort of grappling hook, and estimated he would catch up to the kid soon.

To his left, Eraserhead heard a loud thump and a muffled curse. He adjusted course instinctually, booted feet flying over the gravel roof and capture weapon at the ready. Dropping into the alleyway where he heard Deku, the underground hero sent his capture weapon at the spot he guessed the teen was. The scarf wrapped uselessly around a pipe, Deku nowhere in sight.

Eraserhead quickly snapped the gray fabric back from the pipe, ears straining to hear any noise. All was quiet for several seconds before a quiet creak alerted him to movement from behind. The pro hero whirled around, feeling the weights on his arms slowing his reflexes with the capture weapon. The scarf snapped out just to the right of Deku's arm as the kid swung around a corner and out of sight again.

Dashing forward, Eraser bounced between the two buildings on either side of the alleyway to regain his height advantage and followed after the sound of Deku's bootsteps. Far in the distance he heard a distinctive *BOOM* that could only be Bakugo's gauntlet going off. He snorted, knowing the destruction in that part of the training area would be immense.

He dogged Deku's route from the tops of the buildings, his shadow occasionally crossing over the green-clad hero student as he ran. Eraserhead had to admit, the kid was fast even without his quirk, and agile. The weights on his legs caused Eraser to tire much more rapidly, in addition to already chasing after two of his other students only a half-hour before, and he found Deku was almost a match for him in speed.

Sensing an opening on his target, Eraserhead leapt from the roof of a low building, landing in a crouch directly behind Deku and whipping out his capture weapon to wrap around the kid's arm. He felt the jolt

through the metal alloy as it made contact and *pulled*. Instead of the weight of a small teenager like he was expecting, the underground hero felt a significantly lighter weight on the end of his capture weapon. His eyes widened as a small section of metal pipe came flying at him from where Deku's arm was. Off balance from the miscalculation of weight and surprised by the unexpected object flying at his face, Eraser attempted to dodge out of the way. The pipe, instead of hitting him dead-on in the forehead, glanced off the side of his goggles, dislodging them and disorienting the Erasure Hero.

Taking the momentary distraction to his advantage, Deku's tired form raced up a nearby fire escape to the top of a jewelry store and began leaping from roof to roof, making his way toward the exit a quarter mile away. The green hero gasped heavily as he sprinted across the rooftops, only looking behind himself once to see if Aizawa was following. The pro hero swung into view from around a building, goggles flapping uselessly against his chest instead of on his face.

Izuku felt that he probably gave his teacher an advantage by taking to the roofs, but couldn't linger on the thought as he raced toward the exit. It was nearing now, and Izuku had a sizable head start due to the trick he'd pulled with the pipe. *Almost there,* he thought, breathing heavily. *Just get through that gate.* He felt his stamina draining rapidly. His feet tripped against the concrete roofs with more frequency as he struggled to maintain his speed.

Sprinting for another minute, Izuku glanced behind himself once more to gauge the distance between himself and Eraserhead. The pro hero was rapidly catching up to Izuku with the help of his capture weapon, faster than Izuku hoped he would. Fully aware he was about to be caught, Izuku surged forward, legs pumping hard to clear another alleyway below him. As he landed, rolling like he'd been practicing all week, Eraser's capture scarf snapped against the dirt to his right, barely missing his ankle as he rolled. The noise made Izuku's heart leap into his throat as pushed off the ground and onto red-booted feet again.

His thighs screamed at him as he sprinted forward, looking for a good place to drop down to street level. He spotted a lower building and made for it, darting side to side as the gray capture weapon whipped against the gravel roof. He thanked his many years in middle school spent dodging other students' quirks for his light footwork in this exam, but felt himself slowing. The snaps of Eraser's capture weapon were closer every time.

Izuku saw the gate across a small expanse of partially demolished buildings. He landed gently on the low roof he identified before and propelled himself to his feet again, shooting to the edge and pushing off from the roof with as much force as possible in order to put some distance between him and Aizawa.

The soft whistle of the gray metal fabric tearing through the air warned Izuku of his impending capture and he twisted midair to avoid the attack. In doing so, he realized with a panic that the building he leapt off of was much taller than he originally thought. Green eyes blew wide as he saw the corner of another roof swiftly rising to meet his plummeting body. In a moment of self-preservation, he threw his thin arms out to catch himself before he smashed head first into the steel corner of an office building. Acting instinctively, he activated his quirk, sending the green lightning down his left arm to brace against the impact.

Instead of the expected surge of strength he expected, Izuku heard a sharp series of cracks as he felt bones splinter and excruciating pain shot like fire down his arm. He screamed, feeling like a thousand needles were puncturing him at the same time. He forgot about the exam entirely; he forgot that he was about to crash into the side of a building; he shrieked in agony as he felt something heavy crash into him from his uninjured side.

His momentum changed and someone cradled him as they landed on the hard asphalt. His vision darkened, and the last thing he saw was horrified, glowing red eyes staring at him as he passed out.

Chapter End Notes

Hello hello! Welcome back to another chapter. This time we explore a bit of Izuku's perspective and, once again, inch closer to the whole secret coming out.

One thing to note, I don't know if Ao3 notifies subscribers when I edit a chapter that's already posted, but someone made a very good comment on the last chapter that forced me to make some updates to it. It didn't change what happened at all, but it did give a little opportunity for Aizawa to learn about Midoriya's quirk. You don't have to re-read chapter 5 if you don't want to as it didn't really change the scope of the story, but it's updated if you'd like to read it.

Thank you again for all the support! It really makes my day. :D

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Eraserhead fumbled with his comm as he very gently lowered his injured student and himself to the ground, the kid's green hair brushing softly against his neck as Aizawa held him tightly against his chest. His finger finally pressing the right button on his earpiece, Aizawa gasped harshly, "Recovery Girl, we need a stretcher. Now."

"I know, Eraser," the elderly hero snapped, her motherly persona vanished in the wake of a major injury. "I'm already on my way. Don't move him."

"Copy." Aizawa looked down at his unconscious student, checking for head injuries and finding none. He eyed where the kid's *very* broken arm was securely held against Midoriya's thin torso by his own capture scarf. He knew what Midoriya's quirk did when uncontrolled from the Sports Festival, but he hadn't been prepared to swing around the tall building to see the green lightning sending a literal shock wave down the kid's arm, breaking the bone every inch of the way.

"I'm sorry, kid," he murmured, brushing green bushy hair away from Midoriya's face and frowning at the clamminess of the boy's skin. He felt a weight in his gut, twisting uncomfortably at the sight of Midoriya injured under his watch *again*.

Midoriya's face scrunched tightly as a weak, pain-filled whine escaped his clenched jaw. Aizawa rubbed his free hand up and down in a slow pattern across the green-haired teen's unbroken forearm, his chest clenching. As his student started shifting in discomfort, Aizawa squeezed his arm slightly, mumbling, "Stay still, Midoriya. Everything will be alright."

Miserable green eyes stared up into Aizawa's own, tears already spilling onto freckled cheeks. The teen's chest fell up and down rapidly, and Aizawa saw him kicking his feet against the concrete in an attempt to escape some of the pain. The Eraser Hero's dark eyes lost their usual hardness, the lines of his face softening as he gently reached down to wrap his much larger hand around Midoriya's scarred one. "Here kid, squeeze my hand. I need you to keep still though, alright?"

Midoriya hiccupped and nodded slightly as he clenched his fingers in a crushing grip around Aizawa's hand. The man didn't let any discomfort show on his face as he nodded in approval. "There you go. Now, focus on my breathing and try to match it. Ready?" The Eraser Hero lead his student through a simple breathing exercise, trying to calm the hyperventilating and simultaneously give the kid something else to focus on. From the corner of his eye, he saw Recovery Girl and All Might rushing over with a stretcher in tow but continued watching the injured teen and rubbing slow circles into the back of his clenched hand.

The elderly nurse hurriedly bent over Midoriya and examined him for injuries, smiling kindly when she saw watery green eyes watching her. "Are you hurt anywhere else, Midoriya-kun?" At the subtle shake of his head, Recovery Girl dug through her bag and moved around to her patient's right side. All Might stood to the side, hand on the stretcher and face strained. His usual smile looked more like a grimace as he took in his successor.

Syringe in hand, the nurse quickly wrapped a rubber tourniquet around his right bicep. "Alright, sonny, I'm going to ease the pain a bit. You might start to feel a bit sleepy, but that's okay." She carefully depressed the plunger until the liquid inside the syringe was gone. Aizawa continued to rub circles into his student's hand as he watched the green eyes flare up with panic at the sight of the needle before drooping almost closed as his body relaxed.

Recovery Girl watched the boy's face as the drug took effect, then nodded to Aizawa. "Let's get him on the stretcher." She moved away as All Might and Aizawa lifted the injured teen onto the gurney, then shuffled quickly beside them as they wheeled Midoriya out of the arena and to the waiting UA ambulance.

Present Mic's worried green eyes watched Aizawa from the rearview mirror as he loaded Midoriya into the back of the ambulance and then climbed in himself. Recovery Girl hobbled into the back of the truck as All Might deflated and entered the passenger seat, hero costume hanging loosely on his frame. Aizawa hit the wheel locks on the gurney and gave Mic a thumbs up. The ambulance immediately pulled out from the battle arena entrance and sped to the UA infirmary.

Aizawa watched the elderly nurse work as multiple monitors were powered on and wires placed to detect Midoriya's vitals. Only after the heart rate monitor was clipped over the kid's right index finger and a steady *beep beep* sounded in the back of the ambulance did the

dark-haired hero look away from Recovery Girl. His dark eyes swept over the half-conscious boy, the weight in his gut sinking further. *If this kid loses his arm, it's your fault.* His chest clenched tightly at the thought.

"Shouta, help me unwrap his arm. I need to get a good look at it." Recovery Girl's intense stare pulled him from his thoughts as the two very gently unwound the gray scarf. Despite their efforts, Midoriya still whimpered and reached out to clutch Aizawa's arm when the broken bones were released from their tight hold.

They hastily pulled the rest of the cloth away from Midoriya, and the dark-haired man immediately slipped his hand into the injured teen's, muttering a calming string of words as the boy's pain receded slightly. Verdant green eyes drooped shut, fluttering slightly at bumps in the road. The kid's face still twisted with pain, but it seemed more manageable if Midoriya's loose grip on Aizawa's hand was anything to go by.

Shouta clenched his jaw as he watched his Problem Child from the side of the crowded ambulance. He was so stupid. Why did he let this exam go forward? The kid was clearly unwell, and he thought fighting a pro hero would be fine? STUPID.

"We're almost there, ya dig?" Present Mic's quavering voice called from the front seat. Aizawa could hear the strain in his husband's voice clearly and felt it equally.

The elderly nurse, looking over the state of Midoriya's arm, shouted back, "Take us straight to Musutafu General, Yamada! This isn't something I'll be able to fix by myself."

Aizawa's dark eyes darted up to catch Hizashi's frazzled gaze in the rear mirror. Both men exchanged a meaningful look before green eyes focused back on the road.

Yagi turned around in his seat, face tense and worried. "Is it that bad, Chiyo?" His bright blue eyes peered into the back of the truck, sunken eyes seeming to sink deeper as he took in the scene.

Recovery Girl huffed, hands working quickly to stabilize Midoriya's arm and gritting her teeth at the pitiful moans from the boy. "If it's as bad as I think it is, Yagi, he'll need surgery immediately. I'm not able to fix this here. He needs a more specialized doctor."

*Your fault…*The thought drifted across Aizawa's mind as he watched

his Problem Child wavering between drug induced sleep and painful consciousness. He grit his teeth angrily. *Why did you suggest this stupid exam?*

Yagi cursed in English. “Shit.” The number one hero fumbled for his phone in an oversized pocket of his hero costume. He pulled it out, tapping several times before facing the back of the truck again. “Do you have his emergency contact information? I’ll call his mother.”

Recovery Girl pulled a tablet from her bag, quickly bringing up the boy’s file and passing it forward.

“Shou? Did the green bean ever update his mom’s phone number?” Hizashi tilted his head back to question Aizawa but kept his worried green eyes on the road as he sped down the busy streets toward Musutafu General, sirens blaring.

Aizawa clenched his free hand into a fist on his knee. “No,” he growled angrily, fierce eyes looking at his student and wishing he’d done better.

Yagi, phone held to his ear hopefully, frowned, cursed again, and ended the call. “It said the number’s not in service.” He turned back to face Aizawa. “Does he have his phone? Maybe he has another number for her.”

The Class 1-A homeroom teacher quickly patted the baggy pockets on the kid’s hero costume, only finding a small first aid kit strapped to his right calf. He felt the small hand clenching his tighten and glanced up to Midoriya. Hazy green eyes watched him half-lidded and wincing, pained moans escaping him as Recovery Girl shifted his shattered arm to secure it in a splint.

“Kid,” Aizawa slid closer, “does your mother have a new phone number? We need to contact her.”

The glassy look in Midoriya’s eyes seemed to clear for a minute as he blinked and bit his lip, chin trembling. Tears started gathering at the corners of his eyes as he shook his head and looked away from intense dark eyes. Aizawa watched his student’s face, seeing a different kind of pain settling across the freckled cheeks. “Problem Child…” Aizawa started, but was interrupted by Hizashi’s strained voice calling over the front seats. *Let me help you*, he wanted to say. The words caught in his throat.

“We’re here!”

The truck dipped slightly as it pulled into the emergency room drop-off of Musutafu General Hospital. Aizawa and Yagi immediately leapt from the vehicle and unloaded Midoriya's stretcher. Recovery Girl met the nurses rushing out from the building and explained the situation as the two men wheeled their student across the sidewalk. Aizawa felt every gasp from Midoriya like a punch to the gut as they rolled over bumps and cracks in the cement.

Talking for Midoriya's sake as much as his own, Aizawa kept a steady stream of words flowing as they were directed to a large elevator. "It'll be alright, kid. They'll take some x-rays of your arm first, then they might have to do a surgery to get the bone set."

"Like…the Sports…F-Festiv-val?" A quiet voice mumbled. Aizawa felt a wave of tension leave his shoulders at the kid's voice, his heart jumping into his throat at the relief.

Clearing his throat, the pro hero croaked, "Exactly, kid. Like the Festival. Just…a little…" Unable to find the right words, Aizawa instead put his hand on the padded shoulder and felt his jaw clench.

"That's o-okay…sensei. I c-can…handle it…"

A surge of anger flared in the dark man's chest. *You're fifteen, you shouldn't have to 'handle it.'*

"The doctors are going to take good care of you, young man. You'll be back to hero training in no time." Yagi, as if sensing his colleague's inability to speak, cut in and reassured the injured kid with a smile and a large thumbs up.

Midoriya's thin cheeks scrunched up in a small smile before Recovery Girl and the rest of the hospital staff pulled his stretcher through the elevator doors. The elderly nurse eyed both of the teachers as they attempted to follow the stretcher. "Let the medical professionals take over, you two. You can't do much for him now." Aizawa opened his mouth to argue, but found himself at the business end of a serious glare from the nurse.

Once satisfied the two wouldn't follow, she turned with a flare of her lab coat, walking stick clacking against the hard tile flooring. "See if you can get his mother on the phone. I can approve an emergency surgery as the school nurse, but if he needs anything additional, we'll need parental permission."

Aizawa and Yagi looked at each other, an unspoken determination

passing between them. Yagi nodded to the dark-haired man before hitting the button for the waiting room. Aizawa gazed out from the elevator, eyes not leaving the moving stretcher until elevator doors obscured his line of sight.

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“Explain it to me again, Tsukauchi,” an exasperated voice growled into the waiting room of Musutafu General Hospital.

The detective on the other end of the phone sighed, “Eraser, unless you can prove she’s involved in some sort of criminal activity, as either the victim or the perpetrator, I can’t legally pull her phone records.”

The pro hero cursed and paced angrily across the square room, glaring at the idyllic landscapes hung on the wall of the otherwise bleak white room. Hizashi looked up at him through his yellow-tinted glasses, concern lacing his expression as he braced padded elbows on his knees. His slim fingers spun a cell phone in a bright case as his booted feet tapped against the tile.

Frustrated and out of options, Aizawa dropped into the hard plastic chair he’d been sitting in for the last two hours. “Alright,” he sighed. “Sorry.”

Detective Tsukauchi huffed out a laugh, “Don’t think I’ve heard you say that in years, Eraser. Losing your touch?”

Aizawa snorted, shaking his head. “Not likely.”

The two chucked in a quiet camaraderie before Tsukauchi’s voice sobered. “But seriously, let me know you can’t find her at home or where she works. I can open a missing person’s report.”

The dark-haired teacher pinched the bridge of his nose, sinking his aching back into the hard chair. “I think it’ll be faster to find out from Midoriya when he gets out of surgery. I know how long those reports take to get traction.”

Tsukauchi laughed humorlessly and agreed, both men saying a quick goodbye before Aizawa hung up. Tired dark eyes glanced over at worry-filled green ones, wordlessly exchanging what small amount of comfort they could convey outside the privacy of their home.

Mumbling quietly and quite unlike his usual boisterous self, Hizashi

said, “Yagi’s talking to their landlord right now. He checked the green bean’s phone, but the number for Midoriya-san was the same one we had as his emergency contact.”

Shouta hummed, wishing the waiting room wasn’t full of people so Hizashi could rub the damn knot in his shoulder. As it was, he could see the barely restrained adults around the room eyeing his husband with curiosity, wanting to see if he was *the* Present Mic.

The blond’s phone buzzed, screen showing a new text from Yagi. Swiping the phone screen quickly, Hizashi read through the text before showing the screen to Shouta. The Erasure Hero’s eyes darkened as he read through, frowning as he considered the implications of the message.

*Skinny Might: Landlord hasn’t seen Midoriya-san since last month when she paid rent through September. Said it was unusual for her to pay for more than one month at a time.*

Shouta grit his teeth as some pieces of his Problem Child’s puzzle started fitting together. “Have Yagi check the clinic where she used to work. He said he knew where it was.”

Hizashi quickly typed the message, hitting send before looking over at his companion. His legs and back ached from the uncomfortable chair, but he knew standing up would only make it worse when he sat again. Looking Shouta up and down showed a tense line in his husband’s shoulders and the stress practically oozing from his tired face.

Patting Shouta on the shoulder, he asked, “What do you think Yagi will learn at the clinic?”

The tired hero sighed, “I don’t think Midoriya-san has been working there recently.”

A doctor walked into the waiting room and approached a small group of people across the room. Both watched as the doctor led the family out of the waiting room and down the hall to the elevators. The waiting room quieted now that only he and Hizashi and one other couple were stuck in the uncomfortable chairs.

Voice quieter in the silence, Hizashi whispered, “That doesn’t explain why we can’t find her.”

Aizawa grit his teeth, feeling the frustration at not knowing the full story rising. He surreptitiously leaned his leg more fully against

Hizashi's, needing some sort of grounding for the situation. "Midoriya told Yagi that she lost her job, and they've been having money trouble. But he lied about his mother on more than one occasion. I need to know if she actually lost her job or quit."

Hizashi's eyes widened as he followed Shouta's logic. "You don't think…?"

The Eraser Hero slumped in the hard chair, all but his eyes hidden behind the gray capture scarf. "I want to wait until we can talk to the kid, but I don't think we're going to find his mother any time soon." *You should have seen this sooner,* he thought.

Cursing under his breath, Hizashi's eyes flashed angrily. "You think that's what it is? He was abandoned?" Gloved hands clenched into fists on his padded knees as the clacking of his boots on the white tile grew louder and faster. "Who could do that? Poor kid is sweet, polite, hilarious, all of it! Any parent would want that broccoli boy, ya dig!"

Aizawa silently agreed, but knew if he let Hizashi continue he would cause a scene in the very public waiting room. In an attempt to derail Hizashi's loud, angry line of thought, he quipped, "Do you give all of your students vegetable nicknames or just this one?"

The angry glare he got quickly softened as Hizashi lowered his voice back to a whisper, huffing and slumping back in his own seat with a grimace. "Only the ones who earn them."

"What did Midoriya do to deserve being called a broccoli?" Aizawa watched as another doctor came to speak with the couple across the room. They muttered quietly for a moment before the doctor left and the couple silently stood, exiting through the hospital entrance.

Hizashi, smiling knowingly at his husband's antics, whispered dramatically, "*Earned*, Shouta. The little listener *earned* the broccoli title by being a funny little squirt."

Shouta snorted into his capture scarf, able to relax more fully now that they were alone in the white room. "I'm not sure writing English dad jokes on his homework counts as being funny, 'Zashi."

The blond scoffed, tossing his head to the side dramatically. "Just because *you* don't have a sense of humor, doesn't mean it's not funny, Shou!" Shouta basked in the bright smile aimed at him before he felt his black mood return, thoughts drifting back to the situation they were in: waiting to hear whether his Problem Child was going to lose

an arm or not. Hizashi, sensing the change, lowered his volume and bumped his shoulder against Shouta's. "Shou, I know you, so I know you're blaming yourself right now. None of this is your fault, you hear?"

Shouta buried his face further into his capture scarf, feeling guilt settle over him like a thick blanket. "This is absolutely my fault, Hizashi. I should've never let the kid take the exam. He wouldn't be in surgery right now if I'd been paying more attention."

"Aizawa Shouta," Hizashi snapped, green eyes staring at him with a hard expression over top of his shades. "This. Is not. Your fault. Got it?" Their gazes locked, Shouta stubborn in his own guilt and Hizashi fierce in his denial of it. Dark eyes looked away first.

"I should have seen this earlier, 'Zashi," Shouta mumbled quietly. A warm hand landed on his knee and rubbed soothing circles.

"We don't know for sure if you're right yet, but if you are, there's no way you could have known, Shou."

Aizawa grunted in acknowledgement, but still felt the pit in his stomach. Hizashi squeezed his knee and continued to rub his thumb in circles. The pair sat in silence for several minutes, Shouta collecting his thoughts and Hizashi providing what comfort he could. After another twenty minutes, they both looked up at the sound of footsteps from the elevator hallway.

A young doctor came around the corner, a clipboard in hand and gazing around the waiting room. When her eyes landed on the two pro heroes as the sole occupants of the room, she smiled professionally and strode toward them. "Good evening, are you the representatives from UA for Midoriya Izuku?"

Aizawa stood quickly, eager for any news on Midoriya's current status. "That's us," he grunted.

The doctor nodded, reaching her hand out to shake both of theirs as Hizashi stood also. "I'm Dr. Yamashita. I'm the lead doctor for Midoriya Izuku's surgery and recovery."

"How is he?" Hizashi asked, green eyes wide with concern.

Dr. Yamashita smiled reassuringly, "Midoriya-kun's surgery was a success. One of our surgical experts has a quirk that greatly helped in placing each bone fragment in its rightful place. Right now, he's

sleeping off the rest of the anesthesia. We expect he'll be awake early tomorrow morning."

"Can we see him?" Aizawa questioned, feeling he wouldn't truly believe the doctor until he saw the kid with his own eyes.

"Certainly," the young doctor chirped. "Though he may look worse off than he is. There was a lot of bruising, and the cast is quite large."

Hizashi and Shouta glanced at each other nervously as they followed the doctor to the elevator. "Cast?" the blond man questioned. "Wasn't Recovery Girl able to heal him?"

"Recovery Girl wanted to wait until Midoriya-kun woke up naturally before attempting to use her quirk. She had concerns that the energy needed to heal the break would be too much for him currently." The doctor paused as she pressed the call button for the elevator, gazing at both pro heroes. "You are aware that Midoriya-kun is severely malnourished?"

"We were aware he wasn't eating well," Aizawa grumbled. *Should have done something sooner…your fault…*

The trio was just about to step into the elevator when a voice called after them. "Aizawa! Wait up!"

The dark-haired man placed his hand over the elevator door to prevent it from closing and looked down the hall to see the skinny Number One Hero jogging towards him from the entrance, a yellow backpack swinging from his shoulder. Yagi caught up to them, bringing a black handkerchief to his mouth as he coughed roughly.

The two stepped into the elevator after Hizashi and Dr. Yamashita, the latter looking curiously at the new arrival. Aizawa gave Yagi a moment to catch his breath before asking, "What did the clinic say?"

The doctor hit the button for the third floor as the skeletal man wiped the residual blood from his lips. "They…they said Midoriya-san quit over a month ago. She told them she was moving to a new city. They offered to send a recommendation letter to her new employer, but she declined." Yagi set down the backpack, which Aizawa now recognized as his student's, All Might keychains and all, and riffled through it, pulling out a single notebook. "I found this when I was looking for Midoriya's cell phone. You should take a look."

Aizawa took the notebook, eyes scanning the title, and felt his gut

clench. ‘Adult Responsibilities for the Present,’ he read. Angry dark eyes locked with Hizashi’s upset green ones, knowing their suspicions were confirmed when Aizawa flipped the book open to the first page and read through the first sentence.

*‘Mom left me  isn’t coming home  doesn’t love me  isn’t home right now and won’t be forever  for a while.’*

Chapter End Notes

Poor Izuku! He can't catch a break! And it has absolutely nothing to do with the author of this story, I assure you!

We are so close to the reveal, I can taste it on the tip of my tongue. I'm sure I'm not the only one going crazy! :)

As always, I hope you enjoyed this chapter. If you see any spelling/grammar/typo mistakes or story inconsistencies, please let me know. I read every comment on this story and am always striving to make it better.

I accidentally hit post on this chapter before it was officially done and had to delete it immediately, so if this is the second time you're being notified of a chapter 7, that's why.

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku drifted in a comforting haze, pleasant memories dancing on the back of his eyelids. Kaachan grinned at him from atop the slide. “Watch me, Izuku! I’m the fastest on this slide!” Izuku watched him happily, bright green eyes wide as he swung back and forth on the swing set, his mother pushing him gently as he swung back. *Squeak… squeak squeak...squeak squeak…*

The vision shifted to his home. His mom stood in the kitchen chopping vegetables for dinner. She looked at him over the counter with a sweet smile that didn’t fully reach her tired green eyes. “Izuku, honey, put that away. I need you to start the rice.” The knife thudded against the wooden cutting board. *Chop chop…chop chop…chop chop…*

He was in his home again, but this time the lights were off. He could see the empty living room by the light of the city filtering through the sliding doors that led to the balcony. He sat with his back against the cool glass doors, arms wrapped around his knees as he stared straight ahead at the old plastic clock on the wall. *Tick tick…tick tick...tick tick…*

Izuku opened his eyes, feeling his chest tighten with longing even as his left arm started to throb painfully. He sucked in a sharp breath at the intense pressure in his skin and grit his teeth to prevent a whimper from escaping. He jerked his head to the right, pain-filled green eyes searching for anything to look at that wasn’t the enormous, thick, white cast that encompassed his entire left arm. His gaze landed on the man sitting by his bedside, yellow-green eyes watching him with concern behind square-framed glasses and long blond hair tied in a loose bun. Izuku thought he looked oddly familiar.

“Yo, you okay, little listener?” The man’s mustache twitched slightly as two pairs of green eyes stared at each other.

Izuku’s sluggish mind, weighed down by pain and residual melancholy, finally put two and two together. “P-present Mic-sensei?” he muttered, shocked at seeing one of his favorite teachers and heroes in a plain gray button-up and dark jeans. He thought he spied what looked like a tattoo peeking out from under his English teacher’s

rolled up sleeve, but quickly glanced away, not wanting to appear nosy.

“Just Yamada when I’m out of costume, little listener, ya dig?” Hizashi winked conspiratorially at his student and made finger guns, leaning in to whisper, “Some of the nurses are a little too hero crazy.”

Izuku nodded slowly, still struggling to find his equilibrium. He shifted against the scratchy sheets and winced as the movement tugged at his encased arm. The blond man immediately caught the pained expression and reached for a red button on the side of Izuku’s bed, pressing it quickly and standing to push his chair more towards the foot of the bed.

“Speaking of nurses, let’s get yours in here! She can get you something to help with your arm.” Yamada smiled, green eyes crinkling behind his glasses, and leaned against the back of his plastic chair. Izuku smiled weakly back, not used to having this amount of his teacher’s energy directed at him.

A soft knock echoed from the door and it slid open to reveal a head of very frizzy black hair as a lightly tanned woman in purple scrubs slowly entered the small hospital room. She smiled kindly at Izuku and glanced at Yamada.

“Good morning, Midoriya-kun. How are you feeling?” She quickly checked over the monitor beside his bed before focusing back on him.

Izuku felt his nervousness return in full force as the nurse waited for him to answer. “G-good m-morning,” he mumbled, looking anywhere but at her. Unfortunately, that meant looking at either the large white cast or the IV connected to his right arm. His stomach flipped at the sight of the tube running into his skin and he snapped his gaze back up to the frizzy-haired nurse.

“Does your arm hurt, sweetheart?” She asked, pulling up the clipboard at the end of his bed. She glanced over it before looking back at him. “It’s been about 6 hours since your last dose of painkillers, so they’ve probably worn off.”

Unable to get his voice to cooperate, Izuku simply nodded, feeling his hair scratch against the rough sheets and his cheeks blush at the endearment.

The nurse smiled again before excusing herself momentarily. Present Mic watched her go, before turning back to Izuku and scratching the

back of his head, a wry smile on his face. “Shouta’s going to kill me,” he groaned.

Izuku looked questioningly at the blond man, trying very hard not to shift his encased arm or remember the IV in the other as he pressed the button to raise his bed into a more upright position.

Yamada elaborated, “Aizawa, I should say.” He turned his chair around so he could sit in it backward, bare arms crossed over the back. Izuku nodded as if in sudden understanding, though he long ago memorized the full names of all his teachers. He supposed the two must be close friends. Izuku’s gaze lingered on what was definitely a tattoo before shooting back up to his English professor’s animated expression.

Letting out a long-suffering sigh, Hizashi imagined the glare he was going to get from Shouta when he got back from their house. “He wanted to be here when you woke up, but I made him go home and take a shower.” The blond man waved a hand in front of his nose dramatically, “He stank!”

Izuku sputtered a laugh as he tried to imagine anyone telling Aizawa-sensei that he needed to shower. The idea was ludicrous, but he could see Present Mic having the audacity to try. The green-haired boy smiled shyly at the nurse as she returned with a glass vial full of clear fluid and looked away as she prepared to inject it into his IV. Once that was finished, the nice nurse left again with promises to bring a food tray.

Hizashi smiled happily at Izuku while the nurse was doing her thing, feeling light from the stifled giggle he’d managed to pull from the green bean. He knew Shouta would roll his eyes at his description (“Fucking adorable, Shou. I literally died.”), but couldn’t deny hearing his student, who was so forlorn-looking for the last few weeks, laughing made his chest feel like fireworks of joy. After what he and Shouta talked about last night, Hizashi figured the poor kid deserved something to laugh about.

“Um…Y-Yamada-sensei?”

The blond man lifted his eyebrows, noting Midoriya’s eyes seemed glassier as his thin shoulders relaxed against the stiff cot. “What’s up, listener?” he answered, setting his chin on top of his crossed arms and tapping a rhythm into the floor with his foot.

“D-did Kirishima and K-Kaachan—I m-mean Bakugo. Did they p-pass

their exam?"

Hizashi stifled a laugh. Of course his broccoli boi was worried about the other exams. Kid didn't have a selfish bone in his body. "YEAH! They sure did, listener! Those two make a very intimidating team, that's for sure!"

Izuku gave a small smile at the news. Glad for his classmates even as he commiserated his own flunked exam. The white cast constantly reminded him of the summer camp he was going to miss out on. So much for forging his mother's signature on the permission form. "S-so, does Kirishima get to g-go to the summer camp then? Since he p-passed?"

Yamada-sensei tilted his head to the side and looked at him quizzically. "Sure, listener. Everyone's going to the summer camp, ya dig?"

Now it was Izuku's turn to be confused. He frowned at his teacher's response, trying to figure out what it meant. "But…Aizawa-sensei said if…if we failed the p-practical exam we c-couldn't—"

"I lied," a low voice grumbled from the doorway. The door slid fully open as Aizawa-sensei stepped quietly into the room, his black long-sleeved v-neck shirt standing out starkly against the plain white walls.

It took Izuku a moment to realize that his homeroom teacher wasn't actually wearing his hero costume. *He really just wears black and nothing else I guess*, the teen thought as Yamada-sensei turned to berate Aizawa for lying to his students.

Just as Aizawa quirked an eyebrow at the dramatic flailing of the blond's hands, Izuku caught on to what Aizawa-sensei had said. "Wait," he quietly interrupted, both adults turning to look at him. "I c-can go to the summer camp e-even though I failed the…failed the exam?" The teen felt the tiny hope, which was smashed spectacularly when he injured himself, flare up again.

Aizawa pulled another chair from against the wall and sat down, setting a black coffee thermos with a small cat sticker on it down on the ground beside his feet. Straightening, his homeroom teacher fixed Izuku with a level stare, asking, "What makes you think you failed, Problem Child?"

The green-haired teen spluttered, feeling himself trip over his words more than usual from the painkillers currently coursing through his

system. “W-well, I didn’t m-make it to the exit and I-I’m fairly sure you would have c-caught me before I g-got there, Aizawa-sensei, plus I used m-my quirk and y-you told me specifically I couldn’t d-do that and then I b-broke my arm again and and Recovery Girl said she wouldn’t f-fix my injuries anymore which would explain why m-my arm is in a cast and—”

Aizawa cut him off quickly, “Let me stop you right there, kid.”

Izuku, mouth slightly open from his mumble storm, slowly shrunk into himself at the look in Aizawa-sensei’s eyes. Was it anger? Disappointment? He couldn’t tell.

“You’re in a cast because Recovery Girl didn’t want to accidentally put you in a coma last night. Not because she refuses to heal you.”

Izuku let out a soft, “Oh…” His green eyes glanced between his two teachers, seeing similar expressions on both of their faces. It clicked. Concern. That’s what it was.

“Recovery Girl will always help out, little listener. That’s her oath as a nurse, ya dig!” Yamada smiled brightly at him, though Izuku could still see worry swimming behind the man’s square glasses. The green-haired teen wryly wondered why his mother didn’t follow that oath whenever Kaachan burned him, then harshly squashed that line of thinking. He had a good mother, and he’d regret these thoughts when she came home again.

“Kid,” Aizawa said quietly, “did Recovery Girl make you think she wouldn’t heal you if you got hurt?”

Izuku felt his already sluggish brain come to a near stop at the intense look from both of his teachers. “Uh…well—”

“I have your breakfast, Midoriya-kun.” The frizzy-haired nurse from earlier stepped into the room backwards, pulling a cart full of multiple breakfast trays along with her. She startled when she spotted Aizawa. “Oh! Sorry, sir, can I get by you?” The darkly dressed man stood and pulled his chair out of the way for her to pass as she pulled one of the food trays from the cart and slid past him. One hand holding the tray and the other pulling the folding tray table from the side of his cot out, the nurse expertly slid Izuku’s breakfast in front of him, not a single drop of miso soup spilled.

“Try to eat a little of everything. Alright, sweetheart?” The nurse nodded to both teachers before carefully pushing the full cart out of

the room and sliding the door closed behind her.

Izuku, unwilling to meet his teachers' eyes and hoping they would forget the previous conversation, hastily picked up the cheap wooden chopsticks and tried to pry them apart one-handed. He struggled getting enough leverage to break the sticks apart for several seconds before Aizawa, who placed his chair near the bed again, leaned over with his hand out. "Here, kid." Izuku tentatively handed the chopsticks over, mumbling a quiet 'thank you' when his homeroom teacher quickly snapped the chopsticks apart and handed them back.

Turning to his breakfast, Izuku marveled at the spread and wondered just how much of his budget was going down the drain with this hospital stay. Part of him wanted to only eat the rice to save money, but the hospital probably already charged the full meal. *Might as well eat as much as I can, since I'll be paying for it anyway,* he thought. He slid the soup and rice closer to him on the tray and hastily pushed the yellow gelatin cup as far away from him as he could, a wave of nausea passing over him as his mind flashed to thoughts of slime and suffocating.

Aizawa watched him eat for a moment before sipping at his coffee. "You passed the exam, Problem Child," he grumbled. He eyed the teen's disappearing breakfast with approval, though glanced curiously at the untouched gelatin cup. *Don't kids like that stuff?*

Izuku paused in his meticulous consumption of the delicious breakfast to stare wide-eyed at Aizawa. "B-but…" He swallowed, clearing his throat. "But I d-didn't get through the gate?"

The pro hero simply hummed in agreement as he sipped the scalding coffee. He spotted Hizashi rolling his eyes at him in his peripheral vision and sent a quick smirk at his husband from behind his thermos.

"A-and I used m-my quirk!" Izuku's green eyes stared at his teacher, who simply hummed again and nodded. Feeling incredibly confused, he continued. "B-but you said I-I couldn't use my quirk, Aizawa-sensei. And I b-broke my arm again!"

Aizawa sighed, "I would much rather fix a broken arm than a broken skull. You used your quirk to stop from smashing face-first into a building. I'm not going to fail you for that." He set the thermos down, the cat sticker facing Izuku. "You would have gotten through the gate if you hadn't broken your arm, kid."

Izuku thought for a moment, his sluggish mind still disbelieving.

“So…I passed?”

Aizawa nodded, “You passed.”

“With flying colors!” Yamada-sensei added, a beaming smile on his face.

Izuku felt excitement bubbling up in his chest, both at the relief of passing his exam and at the thought of the summer camp. Two weeks away from his house, surrounded by his friends, and training to be a hero. Izuku couldn’t think of anything he wanted to do more. His excitement boiling over, he slammed his fist into the air like All Might, half-yelling, “I’m going to summer ca—OW!” The jerky movement jolted his broken arm and he felt what had to be stitches all along his arm stretching uncomfortably tight. The pain broke through the comfortable haze the medication had placed over his mind and his face contorted in a split second of agony.

Aizawa immediately stood and stepped to the side of the bed, dark eyes searching Izuku’s freckled face and the area around the cast. “Did you break your stitches?”

Izuku stilled, waiting for the throbbing to fade away and trying to take inventory. When he didn’t feel any lingering pain, he mumbled, “I…I don’t th-think so, sensei.”

The dark-haired man frowned, “You just had surgery, Midoriya. Try not to break yourself again so soon.”

Feeling sheepish, Izuku quietly muttered, “Sorry, sensei.”

Aizawa fixed him with an odd look before sighing and giving Izuku a pat on his uninjured shoulder. “You don’t have to apologize. Just be more careful.”

Izuku nodded, hastily turning back to his cooling breakfast to hide his embarrassment. He pulled the rice bowl closer and shoveled rice into his mouth as he tried to ignore the large warm spot his teacher’s hand left on his shoulder. The pain of his injury quickly wiped away any comfort he found in Aizawa’s touch and morphed almost instantly into a desire to vomit. He swallowed thickly around his mouthful of rice, trying to breathe through the wave of nausea as it passed.

Sitting back in his chair, Aizawa sipped his coffee before speaking again. “If Recovery Girl clears you to go to the summer camp, then you can go. But that’s a big ‘if’, kid.”

Izuku paused after gulping past the rice, swallowing slowly and glancing between the two pro heroes. “I…I thought…Is R-Recovery Girl not going to h-heal my arm?”

“Oh, she is, little listener!” Present Mic exclaimed, lifting his head from where it rested on his crossed arms. “It’s just…well…”

“You’ve lost a lot of weight.” Aizawa deadpanned, sipping at the thermos casually. Izuku noticed the sticker cat was playing with a blue yarn ball. It was adorable. He used it to focus away from the gurgling in his gut. “Enough that Recovery Girl isn’t sure your body can handle the strain of healing your arm completely right now.”

Izuku felt his stomach tighten uncomfortably as he realized his efforts at hiding his weight loss hadn’t worked after all. He picked up the soup bowl to give his hand something to do, feeling a renewed lack of appetite as he stared down at the mushrooms floating in the bowl. Feigning casualness, he slowly sipped at the soup, the liquid turning his stomach as it went down.

“While I’m glad you’re aware of yourself enough to know you’ve lost weight, I need to know *why*, Midoriya.”

Izuku put the soup bowl down, his stomach already gurgling uncomfortably from just the rice and small amount of broth he was to choke down. His deep-green eyes glanced up to meet Aizawa’s intense black ones, a jolt of guilt running through him. He hated lying, especially to his favorite teachers. His stutter worse than usual from nervousness, he quickly gave the lie he gave All Might the week before. “W-well, m-my m-m-mom lost her j-job and w-we’ve b-been tight on m-money u-until recently…” He trailed off, eyes staring at the half-eaten breakfast tray over his lap. His stomach churned, making him clench his teeth and try to breathe evenly through his nose. The familiar pre-vomit sensation filling his chest.

“Midoriya,” Aizawa started, his voice gentle as he noticed the teen’s stiff posture and refusal to make eye contact. “We couldn’t contact your mother, so All Might went to the clinic she worked at. They said she quit almost a month ago. She wasn’t fired.” He reached down to the yellow backpack beside the hospital bed and pulled out ‘Adult Responsibilities for the Present.’ Flipping to the first page and setting it down in front of his shaking student, he pointed to the first written line. Voice soft and serious, he said, “Please don’t lie to me. Not about this.”

Izuku felt a hiccupping whimper escape him and immediately clamped down on his bottom lip with his teeth to prevent any more noises from getting out. He glared at the line underneath Aizawa-sensei's finger, hating his own weakness at that moment. Finally, unable to look at the lines any longer, he shoved the notebook away, uncaring of the wrinkling pages of the miso soup spilling onto the front cover. He felt his chest heaving as he tried to keep the tears at bay. *She's coming back, she's coming back, she's coming back…*

He curled in on himself, uncaring of the pain shooting through his broken arm. It was nothing compared to the ache in his chest. His face disappeared in his knees and he wrapped his uninjured arm around his skinny legs, his fingertips beginning to tingle uncomfortably. Izuku's whole body shook with his harsh, fast breathing as the tears he was unable to stop started streaming down freckled cheeks. *She's coming back, she's coming back, she's coming back…*

A voice drifted across his ears, sounding muffled like it was spoken through a wall of cotton. The words didn't register in Izuku's mind as he wrestled with intense heartache and longing for one of his mother's warm hugs. He felt so cold in the last month in the nearly empty apartment. His chest clenched and his breath hitched as he thought about returning there. Alone again.

A gentle hand ran up and down his back in a smooth motion, uncaring of his shaking shoulders or shuddering breaths. The voice from before spoke again, the warm hand on his back helping to clear some of the fog and focus. "Izuku," it said. "I need you to follow my breathing, alright?" The hand continued its tender circuit across his back as Izuku nodded minutely, his mop of green hair bouncing slightly.

"Good. Now, we're going to breathe in for the count of four. Ready? Okay, breathe in. One…two…three…"

Izuku followed the instructions, trying to focus his mind on the voice and the warm hand. After several repetitions of counting his breaths, Izuku felt the tingling in his fingers ease and the dizziness dissipate. The hand never stopped the gentle rubbing along his shoulders, and as his panic began to clear, Izuku realized with some embarrassment that the hand belonged to Aizawa-sensei.

Ashamed, Izuku buried his head further into his knees, bringing his uninjured arm up to cover his head in an attempt to hide. As he calmed down, the sharp pain in his left arm made itself known. He winced at the needle-like pain, wishing Recovery Girl could have

healed him right away. As if knowing his thoughts, his stomach gurgled loudly, reminding him why that couldn't happen.

Sensing Izuku's discomfort, Aizawa quietly murmured, "I'm sorry, kid. I didn't mean to upset you." His large hand never stopped the circular path across his shoulders and the teen felt glad for the comfort, small though it was.

"S'okay, sensei," the greenette mumbled into his knees.

There was silence for a few moments before Aizawa spoke again. "Do you think you can lay back? I'm sure your arm hurts in that position."

Izuku mulled it over for a few seconds before nodding and unwrapping himself. He wiped his cheeks on the sleeve of his hospital gown as he did, trying to hide the evidence of his tears. Knowing himself, however, he was sure his freckled cheeks were red and blotchy and his nose would be running. As he leaned back, he gasped and winced as his broken arm was jostled. He bit his tender bottom lip, feeling his chin tremble and fresh tears gather in his eyes.

He relaxed against the raised cot, closing his eyes so he could pretend his two favorite teachers weren't present and he wasn't at the end of his emotional and physical limits. He sniffled, wiping his eyes again. He heard footsteps move from the end of his bed to the side, then felt the soft paper of a tissue on his hand.

"Here you go, listener." Two pairs of green eyes met, one set encouraging and understanding, the other watery and bloodshot. Izuku muttered a quick 'thank you' before quickly blowing his nose. The three sat in silence while Izuku calmed himself down fully and let the pain slowly fade away.

Glancing up from the soiled tissue in his hand, Izuku caught sight of the mess he'd made of the bedsheets. Miso soup appeared to have stained the blanket he was under and part of Aizawa-sensei's sleeve. Timidly looking at his teacher, Izuku mumbled, "S-sorry about the s-soup, Aizawa-sensei."

The dark-haired man huffed a short laugh. "It's fine, kid."

"At least soup comes out easy in the wash," Present Mic chuckled, winking at Izuku. The blond man's smile was infectious, and the teen felt the corner of his lips curling upwards if only for a moment.

Aizawa rolled his eyes skyward at the Voice Hero before turning back

to Izuku with a more serious look. “If you feel up to it, I need to ask you a couple questions. You don’t have to answer them if you feel uncomfortable. I won’t be upset if you don’t.”

Izuku’s green eyes met Aizawa’s black ones and he felt sure that his teacher meant what he said. He tentatively nodded, muttering, “Okay…”

“Alright,” Aizawa sat down in the plastic chair, scooting a little closer to Izuku’s bedside. He gazed up at Izuku with a comforting warmth in his eyes that settled the teen’s nerves considerably. The green-haired boy felt a brief surge of confidence followed by a single thought. *I trust you.*

“Are you alone at home?”

Izuku breathed in heavily at the question, feeling his heart clench again. He held Aizawa-sensei’s gaze as he willed himself to have the courage to answer, his uninjured hand clenching against his thigh. After a brief moment, he nodded, feeling relieved at finally getting the answer out.

Not seeming phased by the answer, Aizawa continued, “How long has your mother been gone?”

Izuku, feeling more confident after the last answer and the lack of pity from either teacher, stuttered, “I-I’m not sure e-exactly. Th-there was a n-note when I got h-home from my internship.”

Aizawa’s dark eyebrows drew together at the answer, but he didn’t seem upset with Izuku. “Is there anyone who can take care of you? Aunt? Uncles? Grandparents?”

Green hair bounced slightly as Izuku shook his head slowly. “I-I don’t have any aunts o-or uncles, and my grandparents died wh-when I was eight.”

The two pro heroes looked at each other intently, seeming to have some sort of silent conversation. Yamada-sensei winked at Aizawa. “I know what you’re thinking, Shou, and the answer is absolutely yes. Go sign the paperwork.”

Aizawa rolled his eyes before standing from his chair and turning to Izuku again. At the teen’s confused look, the tired man ruffled his green curls. “I need to make a few calls. Mic will stay with you while we wait for Recovery Girl to get here. Then we’ll see what we can do

about fixing your arm.” The tall man stooped to pick up his thermos, eyes gazing over what remained of Izuku’s breakfast. “Try to eat some more if you can, kid. You’ll want to be in top shape for the summer camp.”

Izuku and Yamada watched the Erasure Hero walk out of the room and slide the door closed behind him, cell phone already out and dialing in a number. Once the door was fully shut, the excited blond turned to his student, exclaiming, “I dig that you’re fluent in English, little listener! Know any JSL?”

Chapter End Notes

Welcome back to another chapter! I've had several of you mention in the comments that I need to hurry up and post this already lol, so here it is!

Poor Izuku, he's hurting so bad! Don't kill me for doing this to him. :'(

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Yagi Toshinori didn't expect much when he exited the large elevator onto the third floor of Musutafu General Hospital, but being immediately pulled into an empty room by Eraserhead certainly wasn't on the list. The dark haired man glared at him with a rare fury that Yagi had never seen directed at himself. Aizawa brought his phone down from his ear, tapping the speaker button on the screen and growling, "Yagi just got here. Maybe he can help me to understand this, Recovery Girl."

The elderly hero scoffed on the phone. "Really, Shouta. This is all just a misunderstanding on Midoriya's part. Yagi, tell him!"

The Erasure Hero turned to Yagi expectantly and both he and Recovery Girl went quiet, waiting for him to speak. His sunken eyes glanced between Aizawa and the phone, dumbfounded. "I'm sorry, could someone explain what we're talking about here?"

Aizawa's eyes, red with the seemingly unconscious activation of his quirk, narrowed at the blond man. He snarled, "Midoriya seems to be under the assumption that Recovery Girl will not be healing him. At. All."

Yagi tried to recall when the pro nurse had ever said something to that nature and couldn't. "Uh…what?"

"Shouta, this is ridiculous. I told Midoriya at the Sports Festival that I wasn't going to be healing any more *self-inflicted* injuries from his lack of quirk control. Not that I wouldn't heal him at all. I was trying to make him see that he needed to learn to use his quirk."

"He seemed to understand that quite differently, *Chiyo*," Aizawa spat acidly, his voice low. "Afterall, isn't his most recent injury *self-inflicted*? Midoriya seemed to think he'd be stuck in that enormous cast until he healed naturally."

A long suffering sigh sounded from the phone. "You've made your point, Shouta. I'll set the boy straight when I see him today."

"Good."

The three heroes stood in silence for a moment before Yagi felt that the uncomfortable tension in the air was too much. “So, I take it Young Midoriya is awake then?”

Aizawa sighed, letting his quirk drop as he pinched the bridge of his nose. “The kid woke up about an hour ago and has since had a panic attack and nearly tore out his stitches twice.”

Yagi’s blond eyebrows knit together, his sunken blue eyes shining with concern. “A panic attack? Why? Is he alright?”

The Eraser Hero sat on the empty cot and dropped his phone onto the empty side table, resisting the urge to sigh again. Yagi followed suit, pulling the hard plastic chair from beside the door. His tall frame put him still at nearly eye level with Aizawa, who sat considerably higher on the cot.

“I tried to pry about his mother and it upset him and caused his panic attack. After he calmed down I was able to get a few answers.” He brushed a hand through his long black hair, staring at his phone on the table. “I confirmed that his mother hasn’t been home since the internships. He’s been alone for over a month.”

Yagi felt a wave of sadness wash over him as he thought of how much his successor must have struggled by himself, but still hadn’t felt like he could come to Toshinori for help. He muttered, “Young Man…” just as Recovery Girl sighed, “Oh dear,” on the phone.

The three sat in silence for a moment before Recovery Girl cleared her throat, her voice a little hoarse. “Do you know which foster agency he’ll be placed with? I need to start coordinating with their agent for Midoriya’s medical decisions. I’m very familiar with Matsuda-san at the New Horizons Foster Care Agency in Musutafu if you need a recommendation.”

Aizawa cleared his throat, looking slightly uncomfortable. “Actually, Recovery Girl, you’ll be going through myself for Midoriya’s care.”

Yagi stared at the younger man blankly, his mind taking a second to catch up to what Aizawa had said.

“Shouta,” the elderly voice on the phone said slowly. “Are you—”

“I used my emergency foster license to get him immediately under my care,” the Erasure Hero said, dark eyes boring into Yagi’s surprised blue ones. “With the interest the League of Villains has for Midoriya, I

didn't want to risk him going into the foster system."

Yagi stared at Aizawa in surprise. He didn't think the dark-haired man had any desire to be around children, despite his current position as a homeroom teacher. But to bring Midoriya under his wing so quickly? It left Yagi with a strange feeling.

Recovery Girl's voice crackled over the phone, "I won't say I'm not surprised, Shouta, because I am *quite* surprised, but I agree. Midoriya is better off with you than in the system. At least I know you'll keep the boy on his meal plan when he's out of the hospital." The nurse paused for a moment before speaking again. "I think I'd like him to eat lunch and dinner before I heal his arm. I'll come to the hospital around six o'clock tonight to discuss everything with you."

"I'll be here," Aizawa returned, reaching forward to tap the red button on the phone's screen as the two said their good-byes. He clicked the screen off as the phone disappeared into a pocket of his dark pants. He stood from the cot, heading toward the hallway.

Before he could open the door, Yagi stood and reached a hand out as Aizawa passed, causing the dark-haired man to pause. "Wait, Aizawa. With regards to Young Midoriya's guardian, I think he would be more comfortable staying with me."

Aizawa's dark eyes bored into his as the man gave him a searching look. "What makes you say that, Yagi?"

The skeletal man stilled, realizing he'd spoken without thinking and got stuck in a corner. "Well…ah…I've known Young Midoriya for longer, and with his mother being… *absent* …I think maybe a familiar face might do him some good." *And he's like a son to me*.

Aizawa's eyes narrowed. "He's been my student for as long as he's been yours, Yagi. And he only knows you as All Might. If anything, *I* would be more familiar to the kid."

Toshinori scratched the back of his head as he tried to think of a way out of the hole he'd dug for himself. Unable to find a reasonable excuse, he simply told the scowling man the truth. "Actually, I've known Midoriya since about a year before school began. I saved him from a villain, and I accidentally revealed my secret to him. He knows about my injury and the time limit as well."

The Erasure Hero stared at Toshinori for several seconds with an incredulous look in his eyes. "Are you telling me," he stated slowly,

enunciating each word carefully, “that the only people who know your ‘state secret’ are a small handful of pro heroes and a *fifteen-year-old boy you saved from a villain attack a year ago*.”

The blond man held up a long finger as he thought, mouth open as if to speak. After a moment, he muttered, “Well, when you say it like that…”

“Yagi,” Aizawa groaned, pinching the bridge of his nose, “start explaining before I do something I’m going to regret. This better not be as ridiculous as you just made it sound.”

Toshinori paused briefly before diving into the story, starting from the slime villain and ending with training Midoriya for the entrance exam. He left out the part about giving Midoriya his quirk. That part was the real state secret, and it was known to an even smaller number of people. No need to let slip more than he already had. He said enough to accomplish helping the teen he cared for as a son.

“So,” Aizawa grumbled, dark eyes pinning Yagi with his intense stare, “Midoriya has known about your secret this whole time?”

Toshinori nodded. “I’ve been mentoring him for quite some time, Aizawa. That’s why I think I should be his guardian. I even got my fostering license this year, so that’s no issue.”

Aizawa sighed, leaning against the closed door and watching the skeletal man quietly. “I disagree,” he stated.

Toshinori startled, straightening his hunched form slightly. His surprised blue eyes were piercing as he gazed at Aizawa intently. “What? Why? I know Midoriya quite well. He wouldn’t be uncomfortable staying with me. And I can help him with his quirk, too!” He didn’t want that boy to hurt himself anymore. At the very least Yagi could keep him in line about quirk use and staying out of trouble. That would keep his old heart from nearly stopping every time the young man was sent the infirmary.

“That’s not it, Yagi.” Aizawa sighed, gaze intense but not heated. “Midoriya needs more than just someone he’s comfortable around, and to be honest, I think he idolizes you too much to truly be comfortable in your presence. He’ll be trying too hard to impress you.”

Toshinori sputtered, “Aizawa, I don’t think—”

Interrupting, the Erasure Hero snapped, “In *addition*, the kid is going

to need a strict meal plan to get back to a healthy weight and likely some amount of therapy, whether professional or not, to work through the problems his mother leaving has caused. Can you honestly say you'll be able to keep up with all that? I've seen how you eat, Yagi. You can barely feed yourself as it is."

Feeling indignant, Toshinori replied, "I would make sure he was taken care of, Aizawa. I care for him a great deal, and I wouldn't let him down like that." The blond man felt a surge of protective instinct swell in his thin chest and felt his legs twitching to run to Midoriya's room and tell him proudly that everything would be okay now. Because He Was Here.

"That may be true," Aizawa grunted, shifting his legs as he leaned against the door. He folded his arms over his black v-neck shirt, saying, "But have you considered the dangers of fostering him?"

"Really, Aizawa. We're both pro heroes here, I don't think that will be a problem," Yagi huffed.

"Exactly. You're the number one hero, Yagi. Every villain is out to get you, *especially* the League of Villains." Aizawa paused, letting it sink in. Toshinori felt his indignation simmer lower as he considered the implications of what the younger hero had said. "The League somehow knew that you would be weaker at the USJ. They knew your deep dark secret then, what's to stop them from finding out if you take guardianship of Midoriya? They're after him, but you're their number one target, All Might. They wouldn't have any problem going through Midoriya to get to you, and that puts him at a serious risk."

Yagi wanted to deny the logic, say it wouldn't matter because he could protect his successor with ease. But that wasn't true and he knew it. If he overdid it, or used too much power too early, he could easily get Midoriya captured or killed. Yagi slumped into the plastic chair he sat in earlier, letting out a defeated sigh. After a moment, he mumbled, "I suppose you're right. He'd be in significant danger if I took him in."

Aizawa hummed in agreement, continuing, "I don't doubt that Midoriya will want you around, Yagi. From what you said, the two of you are close. But he needs more than a close mentor at the moment."

Toshinori nodded, elbows braced on his thin thighs as he leaned forward over his clasped hands. Knowing his successor would be well cared for soothed the skeletal man's worry. The conversation between

the two pros was as much a rebuttal of Yagi's suggestion as it was a chance for Yagi to see if Aizawa would make a fit guardian. The blond man was pleased to see the other hero was as invested in Midoriya's future as he was.

"Well, we might be seeing each other more often then, Aizawa. You might as well call me Toshinori."

"Shouta," Aizawa grumbled as the two pros left the empty room and walked toward Midoriya's door.

—

Izuku stared intently at the motion Yamada-sensei was making with his hands, trying his best to copy it without the use of his left arm.

"That's it, listener! You're getting it!" Yamada beamed at him, his green eyes crinkling with good humor behind square frames. Izuku smiled tentatively back, still feeling slightly exposed from his breakdown earlier, but unable to deny the distraction of learning sign language was working to bring him back to equilibrium.

"S-so…if you wanted to say 'I l-like ramen,' you would do this?" Izuku made several gestures with his right hand, watching his teacher for confirmation and wishing his thin hand would stop shaking.

"YEAH, little listener! Right on!" Yamada shot finger guns at him, leaning so far back in his chair that he lost balance and had to flail his arms to avoid falling backwards. The metal chair legs clinked back to the floor and the blond man held perfectly still as he regained his balance, loose strands of hair falling into his face as he stared wide eyed at Izuku, who stifled a quiet laugh.

"Whew! Still got it, ya dig!" The pro hero and radio show host beamed even brighter, then immediately continued their conversation as if nothing had happened. If Izuku wasn't so used to it in English class, it would've given him whiplash. "Hey! We ought to figure out a sign name for you!"

"W-what's that?" Izuku asked curiously, fully invested in learning this new language. It didn't help that Yamada-sensei had said JSL was very useful for hero work.

"Well, most names don't translate well into sign. Like 'Yamada'. I can spell it out with JSL, but there isn't a single sign for my surname or my given name. So, we make a symbol to represent our name in

sign."

Izuku nodded in understanding, already wondering what Koda's sign name was so he could try speaking with him when they went to summer camp. Curious, he asked, "W-what's your sign name, Yamada-sensei?"

"I make the letter 'H,' for my given name, then the symbol for 'loud.' Like this." He demonstrated, repeating it when Izuku tried to mimic the motion. The teen smiled inwardly, feeling the sign name matched his exuberant teacher very well. "Shouta is ruuuude and calls me 'loud bird,' but I call him 'catnip,' so I suppose we're even."

"We're never even," Aizawa grunted as he slid the door open and stepped inside, bored expression back on his face. The familiar look soothed Izuku's nerves even further as things began to feel normal again, despite the hospital room he was stuck in for the time being. "What are we talking about?"

"Sign names, Shou! We were just trying to come up with one for the little listener!"

The dark-haired hero stood with his hands in his pockets at the end of the cot and raised an eyebrow at the charismatic man across Izuku's bed. Aizawa pulled his hands out and made a couple signs at Yamada, which caused the blond to sputter indignantly, "You are *not* calling him 'Problem Child' in sign too!"

Aizawa shrugged uncaringly, but Izuku thought he detected a faint smile on the man's face and amusement in his dark eyes. "Come on, loud bird, we have paperwork to fill out." He signed as he spoke, making sure 'loud bird' was very obvious. Yamada threw his hands in the air dramatically, rolling his eyes and winking at Izuku before following Aizawa out the door with a quick wave.

Izuku waited several seconds with baited breath to see if anyone else would enter his room before carefully pushing his breakfast out of the way and reaching for his notebook on Aizawa's abandoned chair. The stretch caused his stitches to scream at him as he bent to the side, nearly falling off the hospital bed as his fingers gained purchase on the precious pages. He sighed in relief as he lifted himself back onto the bed, prize clutched in his shaking hand. Heavy breathing filled the room for almost a minute as he grit his teeth against the pain.

Once the throbbing in his arm settled back into manageable levels, he relaxed against his squashy pillow and rapidly flipped through the

pages of his notebook until it fell open several pages from the back. He heaved a relieved sigh at the sight of the folded paper tucked between the blank sheets, apparently undisturbed from several nights ago when he shoved it there after picking it up off the kitchen floor. The note accompanied him to school for the purpose of studying his mother's handwriting if he couldn't get the lease from Ito-san, but Izuku thought at the time it wouldn't *ever* end up in the hands of his homeroom teacher.

Izuku glanced over the side of his bed, green eyes flickering over his backpack where it lay on the floor. His arm was just long enough to reach, he knew, but some internal part of him was wary of tearing his stitches. He steeled himself for the stinging pain he knew was about to follow and reached for one of the well-worn straps. Just as his left arm began to protest, a soft series of knocks echoed from the door, and it slid open to reveal a skeletal All Might peeking his head of shaggy blond hair through the opening with a wide smile.

Izuku paused in his movement, green eyes wide in panic at the unexpected entrance of his mentor. The two stared at each other for a moment before the thin man coughed into his hand and stepped fully into the room, sliding the door shut behind him. "Good morning, Young Man! Here, let me get that for you." Yagi stepped up to his bedside quickly and stooped to pick up the bright yellow bag.

Izuku took the bag thankfully, smiling up at his tall idol and trying to surreptitiously slide the note into a small side pocket. "All Might! Good morning! Oh!" The teen quickly signed 'good morning' and several letters, saying, "Good. Morning. A-L-L-M-I-G-H-T."

Yagi's sunken blue eyes lit up happily. "Well done, Young Midoriya!" He sat his tall, skinny frame into the chair Aizawa had vacated, the one closer to the heart rate monitor. With a wide smile, he asked, "Though I shouldn't be surprised, when did you start learning sign language?"

Izuku smiled at the praise, embarrassed. "Y-Yamada-sensei started t-teaching me this morning. I d-don't know very much yet." He zipped up the pocket with his mother's note in it, then slid his notebook into the largest pouch, shoving the backpack down by his knees when he was finished. "B-but he said he might start t-teaching me JSL instead of English during class since I'm f-fluent already."

"Well, you'll certainly have a head start on the third years. I don't think it's taught until then." All Might laughed, blue eyes lighting up

at Izuku's smile.

"Really? That seems kind of l-late to teach it. I mean, t-there's so many uses in hero work! Especially o-on internships or work studies like second years get to d-do. A-and you won't have much of a v-vocabulary built up!" Izuku locked eyes with his mentor as he felt a mutter storm coming on. The kind smile and shining eyes gave him pause as he soaked in the encouragement from the Number One hero.

Yagi coughed slightly, handkerchief held up to his mouth, "Even right out of surgery, you're still the same Prince of Nonsense. It's good to see." His blue eyes darkened slightly as they drifted over the thick cast on Izuku's left arm. "I was worried for you when I heard what happened. Blowing your arm off and all that." His large hand waved in the air as Yagi spoke.

Izuku nodded, eyes downcast. He was worried too when it first happened, worried he would lose his arm like Recovery Girl warned him of at the Sports Festival. He was still worried, if he was honest with himself. Even Aizawa's calming presence hadn't quite dispersed the fear of never using his left arm again.

"But we were lucky," All Might continued, eyes softening and a smile firmly affixed to his face. "I was talking to Aizawa outside, and Recovery Girl seems to think you'll be fine after she heals you."

Izuku felt a weight he hadn't noticed before leaving his chest. He sunk back into the squashy pillow, letting the wave of relief relax him. A thought struck him as he considered All Might's words. "Did…did Aizawa-sensei tell you anything else?" He tried to make the question sound innocent, but couldn't quite look All Might in the eye when he asked the odd question.

Yagi's smile dimmed slightly as he looked over his nervous successor. "He did." The blond hero paused, trying to find the right words without sounding accusing. "Izuku, why didn't you tell me about your mother? I could have helped."

Izuku swallowed around a lump in his throat, feeling the familiar sting of tears anytime this topic came up. He shoved his emotions down, trying to put a positive spin on his tone despite the worsening stutter and intense clenching in his chest. "She…she said s-she's coming back. I d-didn't want to w-worry anyone, s-so I didn't m-mention it. P-plus I'm fine! I can c-cook for myself and e-everything!" His free hand tugged at a loose string on the blanket across his legs as he waited for

his eyes to stop watering.

“Young Man…” Yagi said quietly, his large, warm hand coming to rest on Izuku’s shoulder. The contact made the teen’s breath hitch as he struggled to control his emotions. Really, how many times was he going to cry over this this week? He went almost a month without any trouble. The blond hero stood and wrapped his arm fully around Izuku’s shoulders pulling him against his chest, murmuring in his low voice, “Even if your mother is intending to come back, you should never be left alone like that. Not even considering the League of Villains and those dangers, taking care of you is a basic parental duty.”

Izuku felt himself stiffen slightly at All Might’s last statement. His mother was a good mother. She just…needed a break. A vacation. He swallowed thickly, moving away from the half-hug and saying, “Mom’s c-coming back before next semester, and I-I have enough money to buy f-food until then. I-it’s really no big d-deal. U-Uraraka’s parents d-do the same thing!”

Yagi’s hand stayed on Izuku’s shoulder, squeezing lightly as he considered the young, hurt teen before him. “I think we both know that’s a different situation.”

“I-it really isn’t!” Izuku protested, green eyes staring up into piercing, worried blue. “We both live alone in an apartment, b-but we have enough food and money to take c-care of ourselves. The r-rent is all paid for a-already, t-too. Uraraka’s parents aren’t a-around since they live in a d-different city, and my mom is just on v-vacation. S-so really you don’t have to w-worry about me, All Might! I-I’m all t-taken care of, I promise!”

“But I do worry about you. I care for you a great deal, not just as my student and my successor, but as my own family.” Yagi stooped so he was eye level with the teen, serious eyes gazing into stunned emeralds.

Izuku gaped at him in surprise, not expecting the declaration from All Might. The hero was a mentor and father figure to him for a long time, and hearing the hero reciprocate those feelings made Izuku feel light. His emotions surging, Izuku felt tears dripping from his cheeks as he mumbled, “I care for you, too.”

Yagi smiled brighter than Izuku had ever seen and embraced the teen as they shared the sentimental moment. Once Izuku’s happy sobs

turned to sniffles, the pro hero croaked, “Has Aizawa told you what’s going to happen when you’re released from the hospital?”

Izuku, unable to speak around the lump in his throat, simply shook his head. Yagi patted his back knowingly. “Well,” he cleared his throat, “I should probably let him tell you. He’ll do a better job explaining it and will likely be far less emotional than this old man.”

Yagi chuckled in a self-deprecating manner, but Izuku caught the odd tone in his voice. It was almost…upset? Taking a moment to calm his stuttering breath, Izuku stuttered, “I-is it s-something bad?”

“Oh no! No, it’s not bad.” All Might paused to cough, leaning away from Izuku before turning back to the emotionally spent teen. The green-haired boy watched him curiously as the strange tone remained. “I promise, everything is good.”

Izuku watched the man wave his hand reassuringly, still feeling off put. *What’s going to happen? I should just be going home, right?* Mumbling a quiet, “Okay…” Izuku searched for something else to say. His mind was sluggish, the emotional morning taking its toll.

Yagi, sensing the Young Man was reaching his limit, said, “Why don’t you rest your eyes for a bit? I can turn on the hero channel and you can just listen?”

Izuku nodded and smiled tiredly at All Might, reaching to pull his blanket up closer to his chin as the skeletal man clicked the TV on and adjusted the volume. Within minutes Izuku found himself nodding off to the familiar sounds of the Hero Network. Yagi reached over and tousled the mess of green hair, promising, “You’ll be just fine, Izuku. And I’ll be here…for you.”

Chapter End Notes

The chapter you've all been waiting for! The last chapter ended very sad for Izuku, and I'm not letting my foot off the sad gas pedal. I won't apologize. You all love it.

Enjoy! And thank you for all the comments! You're all so nice and it's fun to see which parts of the story everyone reacts to. :)

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with

the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Aizawa sat in quiet contemplation as he looked over the preliminary training plan he drafted for Midoriya in preparation for the summer camp weeks ago. It consisted entirely of using and over-using the kid's quirk, just like many of the other training plans for Class 1-A. Dark eyes drifted over the piles of thin folders spread across the end of Midoriya's hospital bed, feeling a sense of deja vu as he remembered sitting in the infirmary a few weeks ago when the kid cracked his head during training.

"This is starting to be a habit for you, Problem Child."

No answer came from the sleeping teen, his freckled face the most relaxed and unguarded Shouta had seen in over a month, though the sunken cheeks made his stomach twist with immense guilt. Sighing into the quiet room, he gathered the scattered folders into a single pile on the end of Midoriya's cot. He chuckled at how much space there was. For such an explosively powerful quirk, the kid sure was tiny.

Pulling out his favorite red pen, he began to strike out and rewrite Midoriya's training plan, exchanging all quirk training with light strength training, parkour exercises, and, most importantly, the meal plan Dr. Yamashita printed off for him once the fostering paperwork cleared the system. He glanced over the list of allowed foods, noting that he needed to bring a lot of them himself if Recovery Girl allowed the kid to join the summer camp. The ingredients the Wild Wild Pussycats were bringing would be good for several variations of curry and not much else.

Aizawa pulled out his phone to snap a picture of the meal plan and send it to Hizashi.

*Cat Dad: [Picture Attached] We'll need to go grocery shopping.*

Goldilocks: Can do!

Goldilocks: Guest room is messy! Might take a while ;)

Goldilocks: [Picture Attached]

Aizawa snorted at the selfie of his husband giving him crazy eyes with the guest room in the background. Several stacks of boxes were in the process of being removed from the closet and some had spilled their contents on the floor, leaving a mess of clothes and old CD cases to mingle together. The twin bed in the corner was covered with two stacks of hoodies and jackets still on hangers, completely obscuring the blue blanket that usually covered the bed.

*Cat Dad: Is that my cat hoodie with the ears? I want that. Put it in our closet.*

Goldilocks: [Cat Emoji] Yessir, right MEOW!

*Cat Dad: Sigh.*

Goldilocks: Shou ur not supposed to actually write 'sigh'

Goldilocks: Use emojis! <3<3<3

*Cat Dad: No, thank you.*

A moment passed as Aizawa looked over the edits he made to Midoriya's training plan before his phone buzzed again.

Goldilocks: Ask my broccoli boi if he likes gray or red better

*Cat Dad: He's asleep. Why?*

Goldilocks: Gotta decide which sheets to put on his bed :D

Goldilocks: I'll go with gray for now

Goldilocks: Doesn't clash with his hair as badly

*Cat Dad:*

Goldilocks: Y did u send me a blank text

Goldilocks: Shou

Goldilocks: as;flkeaj

Goldilocks: SHOU

*Cat Dad: 'Doesn't clash with his hair.'*

Goldilocks: What! It's something u gotta watch out for!

*Cat Dad: Oh certainly, since no one will see him while he's sleeping and clashing with his sheets.*

Goldilocks: I sense sarcasm Shou :( frankly I'm hurt

Aizawa's lips twitched into a small smile at his husband's antics. Truthfully, the man's energy kept him looking forward to each and every day, despite Shouta's outward appearance of boredom and hatred of fun. Hizashi's bright thirst for life and excitable nature was what drew Aizawa to him in the first place. That and being kidnapped to his lunch table in their first year of UA.

*Cat Dad: I'm sure you'll survive. And gray is fine.*

Goldilocks: ;D

Returning to the green-haired teen's training plan, Aizawa continued marking the paper with red ink for nearly a half hour. During that time, the nurse who brought the kid's breakfast earlier popped in, smiling at Aizawa and checking Midoriya's vitals. Once finished, she turned to the dark-haired teacher, speaking quietly, "Excuse me, are you Aizawa-san?"

Aizawa nodded, setting down his pen and giving her his full attention.

"You're listed as Midoriya-kun's guardian now, right? The doctor mentioned it when I spoke to her earlier." The frizzy-haired nurse's yellow eyes seemed to smile at him despite his cool demeanor.

"That's correct," he stated. Glancing over at his Problem Child to make sure the kid wasn't eavesdropping. Shouta didn't want him hearing about the change in guardianship before he had a chance to explain everything. He thought both of them could do without another panic attack or breakdown this morning.

The dark-skinned nurse smiled, her yellow eyes crinkling at the corners. "Midoriya-kun is due for more painkillers soon, but we usually like to administer those with food. Sometimes it can make people feel nauseous. Will you let me know if he wakes up in the next hour? If not, I'll plan on bringing lunch around one o'clock, and we'll just have to wake him so he can eat."

Aizawa nodded at the woman, simultaneously feeling grateful for being kept in the loop, but also strange being the person in charge of Midoriya's health. He supposed he was in charge of all his students'

health as their teacher, but this was different. Not bad. Just… different. Being responsible for another person like this wasn't something Aizawa intended for his life, but now that Midoriya was here, Aizawa wasn't going to let him down. Midoriya was *his* Problem Child now, afterall.

The nurse left quietly, gently sliding the door closed behind her until Aizawa was alone again with the sleeping teen. Midoriya hadn't so much as stirred during the conversation, so the dark-haired hero had no doubts the kid was deeply asleep at the moment. The heart rate monitor continued at the same steady pace it had been for the last half-hour.

The tired man sighed as he glanced over Midoriya's training plan. At this point, he might as well start on a fresh paper with how many red markings covered the sheet. Tossing the thin folder gently onto the bed, he snatched the top folder off the stack of Class 1-A's training plans and flipped it open. Mineta. Aizawa didn't groan his displeasure out loud, but he wanted to. Mineta may have passed the practical and written exams, but Aizawa had *many* things he needed to address with this particular student. Respecting other people's boundaries being one of them.

The pro hero continued working through the rest of the folders, adding comments to address deficiencies he identified in their exams. Most had quirk control issues like Kaminari and Ashido, or were countered by their opponents' quirks like Shoji and Hagakure, and still others had teamwork problems like Bakugo. Aizawa grimaced as he wrote in the margins of Bakugo's training plan. *Has trouble working with others. Even those he likes.*

Cracking his neck as he rolled his head side to side, Aizawa spotted half-lidded green eyes watching him from his right. He shrugged his shoulders several times to ease the tension there before turning to meet Midoriya's sleepy gaze. The teen seemed to take a moment to gather his bearings, eyes tracing the room and lingering on the two empty chairs on his right.

Clearing his throat, the messy-haired teen mumbled, "Um…what… what time is it, Aizawa-sensei?" He reached for the button to raise his bed into a more upright position, green eyes staring curiously at the stack of folders by his feet.

The dark-haired man tapped his phone and checked the time. "Twelve thirty-seven." Aizawa signed the numbers as he spoke them. Midoriya

needed to pick up signing fairly quickly if he was to be staying with them as long as Shouta thought he would. Hizashi frequently went full weekends without his hearing aids in place. 'Just to shake it up, change the vibe,' he usually said. Those weekends tended to follow after Nedzu's more boring meetings.

Izuku repeated the signs as best he could with one hand, forehead scrunched up in concentration as he tried to mimic the motions perfectly the first time. Aizawa nodded in approval when he got it right. The kid smiled, though it was nowhere near the usual brightness. The sunshine teen wasn't carrying around his happiness like a badge anymore, and, though Aizawa couldn't blame him, he made a mental note to get Midoriya scheduled with Hound Dog sooner rather than later. The attack at the USJ and in Hosu was more than enough to warrant assistance, nevermind being abandoned by your only parent during that time. Aizawa's anger at the situation simmered low in his gut, feeling like a pool of sickly acid that he knew would stay there until justice was served for Midoriya. Or at least until Midoriya Inko was brought into the Musutafu police precinct and questioned by Tsukauchi and himself. Harshly.

"How did you sleep?"

Midoriya swallowed thickly, eyes glancing around and landing on the empty water bottle from his breakfast with disappointment before looking at Aizawa again. "Um…a-alright. Did…did Yamada-sensei leave? And um…"

Aizawa stood, grabbing the water bottle and walking to the connected bathroom. He filled the bottle with water from the sink and handed it to Midoriya once he was back in the main room. Sitting back down in the hard chair, Aizawa replied, "He and Yagi both had to leave. And before you start, Yagi told me about how you two met, so yes, I know that you know about Yagi's…small form."

Midoriya opened his mouth to start stammering away about not knowing who Yagi was, but hastily closed it at Aizawa's gentle rebuttal. "Is…is that a problem? T-that I know? I k-know it's s-supposed to be…to be a big s-secret and e-everything…"

"It would only be a problem if Yagi didn't want you to know. Since he told you himself, it isn't a problem." Aizawa tried to make it as cut-and-dry as he could, wanting to stem any unnecessary mutter storms from his Problem Child. Normally he had to fight the urge to let the kid go for as long as he could, just to see what would happen, but in

this instance, any undue stress was to be avoided. Even the stress Midoriya gave himself.

The teen mumbled, “O-oh…” and sipped his water. The sip quickly turned into a gulp as he realized how thirsty he was, downing the entire bottle in a few seconds and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. Aizawa held out his hand for the bottle, standing to refill it in the bathroom. Freckled cheeks blushed slightly red as he muttered a small, “Thank you.”

Taking the bottle and signing his words as he spoke, Aizawa responded, “You’re welcome.” The trip to the bathroom was quick and Midoriya downed another half of the bottle before glancing down at the folders by his feet again. The dark-haired hero sat in the uncomfortable chair once more, wishing the cushioned armchairs from the lobby could be pushed into this room without the hospital staff interfering, then eyed the injured teen. The kid was curious, he could tell, but something was holding him back. Green eyes glanced back and forth between the folders and Aizawa as if he was nervous to say anything or worried the teacher would reprimand him.

*That won’t do*, Aizawa thought and held out the folder he was working on to Midoriya. The kid’s eyes grew incredibly wide, but he didn’t reach out to take it, his hand instead clenching in the blanket on his thigh.

“You’re curious, aren’t you?” Aizawa said, tossing the folder gently onto Midoriya’s knobbly knees. The teen’s small hand snatched back from where the papers brushed his knuckles as if afraid to touch it. “You can read it.”

Tentatively reaching his uninjured hand forward, Midoriya watched him like a frightened cat before slowly opening the folder and scanning the front page. His green eyes roamed over the paper, excitement building as he read. He quickly flipped the folder fully open and rifled through the pages. “Is this…?” He mumbled, running his finger down the printed and written words as his eyes devoured their meaning. “Th-this is Kaminari’s tr-training plan! But…” He trailed off, a slight frown forming in his forehead. “K-Kaminari’s never done any of…of these before. And it’s o-only a two week plan. Usually we do a l-lot of fitness t-training, but this is almost e-entirely quirk training. Plus I d-don’t remember seeing half of this equipment at UA, so this must n-not be on campus so maybe we’re going to a-another off campus facility like the USJ for more training which would make sense, but two weeks is a long time not to be in class and this plan

looks like it would take all day so when are we taking our other classes…"

Midoriya continued muttering to himself as he perused the training plan for another minute, even pulling one of his many notebooks out of his yellow backpack to compare, before he seemed to realize he was speaking out loud and Aizawa was watching him with a single raised eyebrow. The teen hastily covered his mouth with his hand and gazed back at Aizawa with an embarrassed expression. "S-sorry, Aizawa-sensei…"

The dark-haired hero asked, "And after that analysis, what have you deduced?" He kept his tone casual, acting as if the storm of mumbled words wasn't at all unusual. Honestly, as far as strange things teens did, muttering to himself was something Aizawa could handle. The part of him where his non-existent sense of humor lay wondered if the kid would be able to sign as fast as he talked, and wouldn't that be something to see?

Midoriya bit his lip, his hand clenching in the bed sheets again. "Oh… um…a-are these for the s-summer c-camp?"

"Correct." Aizawa stated. Now that he was watching Midoriya more closely, he could see the nervousness flowing off of him in the way he fiddled with his sheet, the stiff set to his shoulders, constantly glancing at Aizawa expectantly. Something was bothering the kid, that was for sure. Something more than being in the hospital and having no parent to return home to.

"Kid…" He started, voice gentle, but was interrupted as the nurse quietly knocked on the door and slid it open.

Her frizzy hair bouncing as she moved, the nurse smiled at seeing Midoriya awake. "Good afternoon, Midoriya-kun! I have lunch ready for you and your pain meds."

His Problem Child quickly shoved his notebook into his backpack, Aizawa just barely catching the title before it disappeared into the yellow bag. *Hero Analysis for the future, Vol. 14.* The dark-haired hero reached forward to take back Kaminari's training plan, pulling out the folding table as he did. The happy nurse set the tray of food in front of Midoriya and pointed to the small plastic cup with two medium-sized pills in it.

"I noticed you didn't like the needle earlier, so I brought pills instead. Will that work better for you, sweetheart?" Midoriya appeared

relieved and thanked the nurse with a small smile.

“Of course, sweetie! The doctor said we can take out your IV as well, would you like that?” She glanced between Midoriya and Aizawa, searching for approval. When both nodded, she smiled. “Alright! Go ahead and take those pain killers then, I’ll be right back with a bandage.” She left quickly, pulling the cart of food trays behind her.

Midoriya quickly downed the pills along with his remaining water. Aizawa broke apart the wooden chopsticks for him and took the empty bottle to the bathroom sink to refill it again. He watched his Problem Child from the bathroom door. While Midoriya certainly wasn’t eating with gusto, he was at least eating most of what was provided. Though Shouta noted the cup of jelly was pushed to the side again and remained untouched.

The pro hero returned with the full bottle of water and sat down, gathering the folders and putting them on the floor. He opened his phone briefly to give Midoriya a little privacy to eat while they waited for the nurse. Aizawa had a feeling he and Midoriya needed to have a serious conversation if he was reading the kid’s body language correctly, and he didn’t want to be interrupted by anyone.

*Cat Dad: Midoriya is awake.*

Goldilocks: Good powernap?

Goldilocks: Almost done with his room :D

Goldilocks: [Picture Attached]

The picture showed an almost cleared out guest room, complete with fresh grey sheets on the bed. None of the jackets or clothes remained, and only a small stack of CDs on the desk was left to put away.

*Cat Dad: He needed sleep. He’s very quiet though.*

Goldilocks: :( he say anything more about his mom?

*Cat Dad: No. He seems nervous. I’m not sure why.*

Goldilocks: Poor kiddo :’( I imagine it’s scary for him

Goldilocks: Are you going to tell him about moving in with us?

*Cat Dad: I’ll try broaching the subject.*

Goldilocks: <3 <3 <3

Goldilocks: Make sure he knows he's welcome! I felt like a burden in my first foster home, I don't want him thinking that >:(

*Cat Dad: I'll make sure he knows. Also, don't buy any jello from that grocery list. He doesn't like it.*

Goldilocks: ;) gotcha

Midoriya was almost through the rice bowl and vegetable dumplings when the frizzy-haired nurse returned. She held a packet of gauze and a selection of bandaids, along with two rolls of elastic bandages, both different colors.

"Alright, Midoriya-kun. All Might, Best Jeanist, or Hawks for your band aid?" She set the rest of the items on his blanket on the end of the bed. Midoriya selected the All Might band aid with a blush, but the nurse didn't seem to notice. She quickly prepped the bandage and gauze and removed the tape securing the IV to the green-haired teen's arm. "You can look away if you'd like to, sweetheart. And one, two, three!"

Aizawa watched the teen wince as the IV was pulled out, noting the almost instant relieved slump in his shoulders as the needle was capped and placed in the sharps bin on the wall. All Might bandage securely in place over the rolled up gauze, the nurse held up the two elastic bandage rolls. "Red or blue, Midoriya-kun?"

"R-red please."

The nurse smiled and quickly wrapped the roll twice around Midoriya's slim arm, squeezing to make sure the bandage sayed in place. She tossed the band aid wrapper in the trash and gathered the rest of her items. As she was sliding the door open to leave, she pointed at the red fabric around Midoriya's arm. "Leave that on for at least twenty minutes, okay sweetheart? Then you can take it off. Leave the band aid on for at least twenty-four hours." She smiled and nodded at Aizawa before exiting the room and sliding the door behind her again.

The two sat in a not entirely comfortable silence. Aizawa could tell the kid was still nervous, though losing the IV seemed to make him calmer. Green eyes kept shooting furtive looks at the pro hero while Midoriya finished his lunch. Feeling as if the teen was working himself up to something, Aizawa slid his phone back in the deep pocket of his

black pants and turned to face his injured student. “Something you want to ask, kid?”

Midoriya ducked his head, green curls bouncing at the sudden movement. He fidgeted with the sleeve of his hospital gown, teeth sunk deep into his bottom lip. Aizawa was surprised he didn’t draw blood. Gently tapping the back of the teen’s hand, he murmured, “You’ll split your lip doing that, Problem Child.”

The imprisoned lip was immediately released, though much more red than its twin. Midoriya sucked in a deep breath, eyes glancing tentatively up to Aizawa’s own before he stuttered, “I…I was j-just wondering um…why…why you were here, Aizawa-sensei? N-Not that I’m not g-grateful…um…”

Aizawa slid his chair closer and gave the teen his full attention. Grunting softly, Aizawa asked, “Why wouldn’t I be?”

Confusion passed over Midoriya’s face, a small frown line appearing between his eyebrows. “I…I…well, y-you don’t have t-to sit w-with me if…if you have s-something more important to d-do.”

Aizawa felt a pit forming in his stomach at the clear example of the kid’s low self-esteem. He knew about it since the teen started in his class, but it was easy to forget with Midoriya’s sunshine smiles and easy manners. Knowing he would need to nip this in the bud before anything else, Aizawa stared straight into Midoriya’s eyes as he spoke seriously, “Midoriya, your well-being *is* my top priority. Nothing else is more important.”

“W-why?” The teen asked, incredulously. He stared at Aizawa with wide eyes, jaw slack with surprise. Aizawa didn’t like the look in his eyes, like the hero was crazy for thinking Midoriya was worth any special attention. “I-I mean…I’m just another s-student. I’m not th-that important!”

Aizawa sighed, maintaining eye contact with the teen, “Problem Child, no one in 1-A is ‘just another student’ to me. You’re all individuals who deserve to be treated with human decency. That includes sitting by your hospital bed when you’re injured.”

Midoriya held his gaze for a few moments before dropping his eyes to his lap where his free hand clenched and unclenched the thin blanket. “O-okay, Aizawa-sensei.”

The dark-haired hero knew it was now or never. He had a feeling

Midoriya wouldn't take it well, but it had to be said. Sighing and shifting in the uncomfortable seat, Aizawa continued, "Having said that, there is another reason why I'm here."

Green eyes snapped back up to Shouta's with sharp curiosity and nervousness hidden deep behind the emerald irises. Midoriya's hand clenched tightly in the blanket again.

Aizawa decided the logical approach would be easiest to explain and least likely to trigger another panic attack. "With your mother not home, it's important that you have a new guardian. You're not legally an adult yet, which means you would normally be placed into the foster care system." He paused for a moment, letting everything sink in. A flash of panic showed on Midoriya's face at the mention of foster care, and Aizawa made sure to file that information away for later.

"I assume you know what foster care is?"

Midoriya nodded, no longer looking at Aizawa and staring down at his hand, which turned nearly white with how tightly he clenched his fist. The teen was starting to curl in on himself and Aizawa could hear his breathing speed up. The heart rate monitor started to beep faster. He gently laid his hand over Midoriya's clenched one, rubbing smooth circles on the skin like he had while they were transporting him to the hospital.

"Let me finish before you start making worst-case scenarios, kid."

Midoriya's eyes glanced up at him from where his chin was tucked into his chest. "B-but…you just s-said…with foster care…"

"*Normally*," Aizawa emphasized, "you would be placed in foster care, but with your injuries and the League of Villains taking an interest in you, it's just not feasible."

Midoriya frowned, trying to understand what Shouta was saying. "I…I can just stay at h-home, can't I? M-my mom s-should be back b-before school starts a-again, anyway…" The teen swallowed thickly, breathing in through his nose and out through his mouth in a sporadic rhythm.

Aizawa continued to rub slow circles on his hand, trying to formulate the best response and realizing he wasn't doing a good job. "Leaving you alone for that long, even *if* your mother returns, isn't an acceptable option."

Midoriya countered, voice stronger but still stuttering, “B-but I’ve been alone t-this whole time! I’ve m-managed everything just f-fine, and my m-mom is coming home. She is.” His green eyes stared up beseechingly into Aizawa’s dark ones. Shouta couldn’t bring himself to explain that Tsukauchi was starting an investigation into Midoriya Inko for child abandonment and the woman would likely never have parental rights over her son again. He couldn’t break his heart that way. Not with those nervous eyes staring up at him.

“Problem Child,” he started, but was quickly interrupted.

“R-really, Aizawa-sensei! I h-have enough m-money and everything! I sold my h-hero stuff l-last week and got enough t-to last past when m-my mom is coming back! See?” He hastily pulled *Adult Responsibilities for the Present* out of his yellow bag, flipping back several pages before landing on a list of items and prices. He pointed to the list, which Aizawa saw consisted of almost entirely All Might merchandise. He would have been impressed by the amount of yen it totalled to at the bottom if not for the clenching in his chest. *Oh kid…*

Feeling a lump in his throat, Aizawa cleared it, moving his hands so one rested on Midoriya’s hand and the other laid on his thin shoulder. The teen was breathing fast, eyes glassy with unshed tears and begging Aizawa to understand. The dark-haired hero crouched slightly so the two were on eye level, his gaze softening at the cracking facade on Midoriya’s face. This was all too much to handle for someone his age, and Aizawa’s chest ached because the fragile teen had no choice but to go through it.

“Izuku,” he croaked, feeling a tightness in the back of his throat. Midoriya hiccupped at his name, tears starting to gather in his eyes in earnest. His green irises seemed to beg him *please.* “I’m so sorry this happened to you, kid. I wouldn’t wish this on anyone,” Aizawa started, finding it hard to speak evenly. Midoriya watched him silently, his face miserable and tears falling freely from his freckled cheeks. Aizawa pulled him close with the hand on his shoulder, careful not to jostle the thick cast as he embraced the teen.

“But you’re not alone anymore, Problem Child. I promise. I’ll be here the whole time.”

Chapter End Notes

> I'm not exactly happy with the first part of this chapter. I think it needs some editing, but I wanted to get this chapter out to

everyone before the weekend was over. :) I'm planning on editing this whole fanfiction after it's complete to make it more cohesive as a work and also just improve on it, so this chapter will get touched up then. :D

Thanks for all the comments! It really makes my day to see how excited and invested everyone is. :) So thank you!

Since I can see the light at the end of the tunnel for this fanfic, I'm starting to think on future projects. As part of improving my writing, I thought it might be fun to do a prompt challenge. I saw one author had used the 2021 Inktober prompts, and I really liked a lot of the stuff they came up with. I took a look at the prompt list and woooooo boy do I have some ideas! I'm thinking mostly Aizawa and Izuku Dadzawa fics (because that's MY favorite, what's yours?), with some Dadmic and Shinso thrown in for flavor. So if you're interested in that kind of thing, stay tuned!

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EDIT: Hah! Light at the end of the tunnel? How wrong I was...20 chapters later...

EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“But you’re not alone anymore, Problem Child. I promise. I’ll be here the whole time.”

Izuku voice cracked as he sobbed into his teacher’s chest, almost unable to believe the words Aizawa was speaking. Izuku never felt more alone in his life than he did in the last month. His back hunched as he curled in on himself, the immense aching in his chest overwhelming.

He could hear Aizawa muttering quietly to him in his low voice, and he felt the pro hero’s warm hand rubbing circles on his back. The man’s presence provided some measure of comfort to him, but Izuku’s whole body continued to heave with the force of his emotions. His free hand clenched tightly against the hospital blanket, and he was sure his knuckles would be completely white if he could see them.

Several minutes passed as Aizawa gently held him, a continuous stream of reassuring words flowing as Izuku let out all the sadness and loneliness he felt since coming home to an empty house, his mother gone without so much as a goodbye. *She’ll be back*, Izuku thought forcefully, trying to reign in the hiccuping sobs still shaking his body. *She said she’ll come back.*

The thought gave him an anchor to cling to, something to focus on instead of the roiling sea of emotion inside him. It took several minutes, but Izuku was finally able to calm himself to only sniffles and shuddering breaths. Aizawa let go of his hand to reach behind him briefly. He set a box of tissues down on the bed and offered one to Izuku. The teen gratefully took it, quickly wiping his freckled cheeks dry of the tears and blowing his nose. “S-sorry,” he mumbled, pulling away from Aizawa’s embrace and realizing he left a sizable wet spot on the man’s black shirt.

Izuku kept his eyes cast downward at his lap as Aizawa murmured, “There’s nothing to apologize for, kid.” His homeroom teacher sat in the plastic chair by his bedside again, but kept his large hand over Izuku’s uninjured one. Izuku swallowed thickly, feeling oddly comfortable with the contact but desperately wishing for something to

focus his mind on.

After a moment to steady his voice, Izuku asked, “S-So…wh-what’s going t-to happen…if…if I don’t go i-into f-foster care…?” His voice trembled more than Izuku wished for, but he couldn’t tamp down his emotions any further to calm himself. He felt every ounce of the last month just bubbling under the surface waiting for him to burst into tears again and let it all out. *I’ve cried more this week than the last three months combined*, he thought. *I need to control myself better. Heroes don’t cry. Heroes smile so everyone knows they’re safe.*

“Well…” Aizawa paused for a moment as he considered the question, then he answered in as close as Aizawa ever got to a rush, “You’ll live with me.”

Izuku’s head shot up, green eyes locking with Aizawa’s in shock. The two held eye contact for several moments as Izuku replayed the words in his head. Stuttering, the teen gasped, “W-what? I…I think I m-misheard you, Aizawa-sensei…”

“No, you heard correctly,” Aizawa stated calmly. “You will be staying with me for the time being.” The hero’s dark eyes searched the teen’s face as Izuku’s mind traced every impossibility that led to this moment.

“Why?” Izuku asked, his voice small and timid as he let everything sink in. He had to ask. There was no reason why Aizawa, of all people, would want Izuku staying at his home. He was just a student, and not a very good one at that. He was useless, just a burden. He couldn’t even use All Might’s quirk without hurting himself, something the number one hero had no trouble with.

Aizawa lifted an eyebrow at him, “Because you need help.” He didn’t elaborate further, which left Izuku still feeling confused and disbelieving.

“B-but,” he protested, “you d-don’t have to d-do that! I c-can just stay home by myself, really! Y-you don’t really want me a-around, and you d-don’t have to be forced to take m-me in. I’ll j-just be a burden and g-get in your way!”

Aizawa’s hand tightened slightly over Izuku’s at his words, and he growled, though there was no heat to his words, “You are not a burden, and you will not be in my way. I want you to listen carefully to what I’m about to say.” He paused, locking eyes with Izuku and holding the gaze for a moment before he continued without blinking,

“I took you on under my Emergency Foster License, which makes me responsible for you as your foster parent. I didn’t do that because I was forced to. I did it because you needed help, and I *wanted* and *was able* to help.” He paused, giving Izuku a moment to think. “Do you understand?”

Izuku bit his lip as he continued to lock eyes with Aizawa, unable to look away from the intense gaze. Finally, he slowly shook his head, eyes shining with confusion as his green curls bounced slightly. Aizawa’s eyes softened as he blinked for the first time in several minutes. “Which part doesn’t make sense?” He asked gently.

Izuku’s green eyes stared down at the man’s calloused hand rubbing circles on the back of his own as he ordered his thoughts. “I…” He paused, trying to figure out how to phrase it correctly. “I don’t u-understand…why you would… *want* …” Izuku couldn’t finish the sentence, but the pro seemed to understand what he meant. Bracing himself for the answer he knew was coming, Izuku bit hard into his lip and hung his head low. *I would never want to help you. You’re useless. Quirkless hero wannabe.*

“Midoriya,” Aizawa started, his voice sounding a little choked. *Sensei’s so upset he can’t even talk! I shouldn’t have called his bluff! Of course he doesn’t want me around!* “I think you’re going to be an amazing hero one day, and I want to make sure you have everything you need to get there. If that means my guest room becomes *your* room for a while, then that’s fine by me.”

Izuku flinched as if Kaachan was coming at him with a full force blast, then stilled as his brain caught up with his ears. A small warmth bloomed in his chest, slowly spreading throughout his being. He felt light as his green eyes locked with Aizawa’s concerned dark ones. “Do…do you r-really mean that, sensei?” He cleared the lump in his throat and wiped at his eyes. “Y-you really think I c-can be a good h-hero?”

Aizawa leaned forward, a small crease forming between his dark eyebrows. “You have the potential to be one of the best. I have no doubt about that.”

Izuku sniffled heavily as he felt tears pushing at the corners of his eyes again. He clenched his jaw, trying to keep the tears from falling, already feeling tired of the endless waterworks, but unable to really prevent it. “T-thank you, Aizawa-sensei,” he half-sobbed, wiping at his eyes again.

“You’re welcome.” Another tissue was offered to Izuku, and he took it gratefully to wipe his leaking eyes. Aizawa continued to watch him for several seconds, the frown still in place as he puzzled over why his Problem Child flinched like he expected to be hit. The answers he came up with sat heavy in his stomach, as did the teen’s reaction to what Aizawa thought was praise Izuku received frequently from his mother and friends. Hell, Yagi would be the most likely candidate for praising the teen, being his secret mentor. Aizawa questioned cautiously, “Has no one ever told you that before?”

Izuku sniffed, red-rimmed green eyes glancing up at Aizawa nervously. “Oh…um…” He tried to think of anyone other than Yagi-san who encouraged him like this, and felt his stomach drop as he realized that no one else had. “I…I guess…just All Might? Um…”

Aizawa raised an eyebrow. *Just* All Might? The mental file he had on the teen was growing and it left him with a simmering anger in his gut. There were so many things he missed in regard to Midoriya Izuku. He quietly asked, “Your mother never encouraged you in heroics? Your friends?”

The green-haired teen cleared his throat, eyes downcast and bottom lip firmly between his teeth. He shook his head, unable to speak as his mind flashed through his middle school memories. *Kaachan yelled at him, “Quirkless Deku! Why would anyone want you to save them! You’ll just be in the way!” His mother watched disapprovingly from the kitchen as he analyzed new hero debuts on the TV.* Izuku curled in on himself, his knees becoming an excellent place to hide his face and his uninjured arm wrapping around his legs. He sniffed heavily as he held back the neverending tears, wishing he had a quirk that could dry up his tear ducts so he didn’t have to deal with watering eyes anymore.

Aizawa watched Izuku close off and made a mental note that this was a sensitive topic. He gently rubbed the teen’s back, following the same pattern he used earlier when Izuku panicked. He listened to the unsteady breathing and the heart rate monitor, glad to see he didn’t accidentally trigger another panic attack.

The two sat quietly for several minutes as Izuku fished for any other topic to think about. Never in a million years did he think he would end up staying in Eraserhead’s house, but now that the prospect was a certainty, Izuku felt his head fill rapidly with questions. Did Eraserhead live in an apartment or a condo or a house? What city did he live in? Does he commute to UA every day or is he close by? Does he have the yellow sleeping bag at home too or is that just for school?

Does he legitimately wear black every day? What kind of coffee does he drink in that cat-sticker mug? Does he like cats?

Aizawa sat quietly through the mutter-storm happening in front of him, happy to see the kid was able to bounce back so quickly, even if it was a strange sort of coping mechanism. He didn't bother to answer any of the questions or bring it to Midoriya's attention that he was, in fact, speaking out loud, simply letting the kid continue in ignorant bliss. He was sure Hizashi would rope them all into a game of 20 Questions eventually. No need to embarrass Midoriya now and ruin his improving mood.

After several moments of muttering, Izuku froze up, looking around behind Aizawa. "I-is that the bathroom?" Aizawa nodded, pulling the heart monitor off the kid's finger as Izuku hastily shoved the blankets off his legs with his good arm and gingerly stepped onto the cold tile with bare feet. Right arm holding up the left, Izuku scampered to the bathroom, hastily shutting the door behind him. His freckled face was aflame even as his left arm twinged painfully, the two bottles of water he'd guzzled making a reappearance.

*Great first impression, Izuku. First you soak his shirt and fawn over him because he gave you a compliment, then you sprint to the bathroom like a villain is chasing you and probably show off your whole backside.* Izuku glanced at the back of his hospital gown, relief washing through him as he saw the gown tied at the shoulders and covered his back completely.

Finishing his business, Izuku washed his hands carefully in the sink. He caught sight of himself in the mirror and paused at his sunken cheeks. He hadn't paid much attention to the weight he was losing, but he looked almost like All Might's skeletal form now. He pulled up the hospital gown as much as he could, green eyes tracing over the ribs sitting prominently under his skin. His stomach was significantly less defined than during his internship, and he could see his hip bones jutting out.

*No wonder I broke my arm again,* he thought sadly. *I'm back to my middle school strength, and I can't 'flex' like All Might to hide how weak I've become.* He dropped the gown and brushed his fingers through his tangled curls to tame them into something more presentable. *I let this go too far,* he thought. Then he paused, looking at his bloodshot eyes in his reflection. *But mom said she would be back, so I needed to do this.*

Drying his hands, he quietly opened the door back into his room.

Aizawa sat in the same chair he had been, looking at something on his phone and tapping on the screen. He glanced up as Izuku padded back towards the bed before setting his phone aside and sitting forward. Izuku settled back onto the bed and picked up the heart rate monitor. He struggled to put it on his finger one-handed, and instead held it out to Aizawa. “Can you…?”

The dark-haired man made short work of clipping it back on his finger, then leaned his elbows on his knees. He watched Izuku’s face for a moment as the teen fiddled with a chibi All Might keychain on his backpack before asking, “Do you have any questions about the situation? I know this isn’t exactly typical.”

Izuku bit his lip in thought. He had a lot of questions, but he felt entirely out of his comfort zone with the thought of living with *Aizawa* of all people. Instead of asking anything, Izuku just shook his head. “N-no questions, sensei.”

Aizawa frowned slightly, watching Izuku as he stared fixedly down at his backpack. Realizing his Problem Child wasn’t going to speak first, Aizawa searched around for something to pull the kid from his nervous muteness, then remembered one of Midoriya’s earlier questions during his mutter-storm. “Are you allergic to cats?”

Izuku’s head shot up in surprise as his green eyes widened curiously. He stammered, “Um…No, I-I’m not.” He waited for Aizawa to speak again, but the man remained quiet, watching him with a glint of something like humor in his dark eyes. Curiosity bubbled in his chest, building as the seconds ticked by. Izuku clamped his jaw, trying to prevent the question from bursting out, but as the silence continued, his curiosity got the better of him. “D-Do you have a cat, Aizawa-sensei?!”

Aizawa nodded, lip twitching slightly at the excitement the kid was trying desperately to hide. He pulled out his phone and opened his pictures, scrolling through until he found the most recent cat photo shoot. He tossed the phone to Izuku, trusting the teen wouldn’t start scrolling through his phone without permission. Izuku stared happily at the picture, a small smile growing on his face as he took in the very grumpy-looking feline lounging across a frumpy couch cushion.

“Um…wh-what’s their name?” Izuku shyly handed the phone back, fingers itching to swipe across the screen for more pictures. He always liked cats, but his mother never wanted animals in the house again after watching their neighbor’s cat for two weeks when he was six.

The poor thing was very old and nervous with the new surroundings. His mother rented a pet vacuum for the full two weeks to keep up with the frequent 'accidents.'

"Her name is Tofu. She's a drama queen." Aizawa scrolled to another picture, this time of the tan cat splayed out on her stomach next to her empty food bowl, all four legs stretched as far as they could go. He showed it to the teen, and as Izuku's smile grew more pronounced, Aizawa saw the nervousness slowly bleed away from the kid's shoulders. "She's on a diet and tries to pretend we haven't fed her to get more food."

Izuku stifled a laugh, imagining the no-nonsense pro hero trying to wrangle such a melodramatic cat, then paused when he realized what Aizawa had said. *We.* Izuku choked on his laugh and began to internally debate himself on whether to point out the mistake. *Who is we? Does Aizawa-sense have a roommate? Is he married? Boyfriend? Girlfriend? He never lets anything out about his personal life.*

This internal monologue continued as Izuku had a flash of minor panic and realized he took too long to respond. Aizawa's dark eyes watched him calmly as he turned the screen of his phone off and slid it back into his deep pocket. The older man leaned back in his chair and threaded his fingers together over his chest.

Izuku swallowed a lump in his throat, wondering whether to say anything. Aizawa had shown him a significant measure of trust by allowing Izuku to stay at his home for, at the very least, the next few months until his mom came home. Did that mean he was supposed to know about Aizawa's personal relationships? Was he going to intrude?

"Um…A-Aizawa-sensei?" Izuku began, biting his lip lightly and twisting his sheets in his hand.

The dark-haired hero raised an eyebrow and hummed in an encouraging manner.

The teen opened his mouth to respond and found the words caught in his throat. "Um…wh-when you say…'we'...um…"

Aizawa's lips twitched. "Can you keep a secret?" His tone was almost playful, his dark eyes shining.

Izuku blinked, unsure where this sudden change in attitude came from. He nodded, eyes wide as he watched his usually very private teacher divulge details of his personal life. He sipped at his water for

something to do with his hands.

“Good,” Aizawa stated, his posture casual. “Then I won’t be hearing rumors around the school about how Yamada-sensei and I are married.”

Izuku choked on a mouthful of water, coughing in surprise at the calm statement from his homeroom teacher. He wasn’t sure what he expected, but the offhanded way Aizawa-sensei said the answer wasn’t it. The Erasure Hero gently patted him on the back as he hacked up the water he accidentally breathed in. When Izuku was finally able to speak clearly again, he replied, “N-No, sensei. I w-won’t tell anyone!”

Aizawa nodded, calm as can be despite revealing something that should be big news. Izuku ducked his head, teeth firmly around his bottom lip. His mind flashed to something that puzzled him since the first of the year. He didn’t want to annoy his teacher—guardian now, he supposed—but the curiosity got the better of him. “S-so it *is* a wedding r-ring? On Yamada-sensei’s n-necklace?”

Aizawa considered the perceptive teen before him, then a small smile tweaked his lips. “Correct. I’m surprised you saw it, honestly.” His tone was praising, something Izuku was not used to in the slightest.

Face flushing, Izuku mumbled, “I-it got tangled on his h-headphones in English…”

Aizawa nodded, that comfortable smile still on his face. “That’s not an uncommon occurrence. Hizashi is a bit of a klutz, to be honest. You’ll see when we get you moved in.”

Izuku nodded, though his gut clenched uncomfortably at the thought of actually moving into Aizawa’s home. It felt strange, but Izuku supposed he didn’t have another choice. His homeroom teacher didn’t seem thrilled at the idea of leaving Izuku alone. “O-okay, Aizawa-sensei.”

Aizawa paused, thinking. He sighed. “I know this will be…well, not easy for you to get used to. I hope you’ll be comfortable though.” Izuku nodded in response . Aizawa continued, “Let’s start with dropping ‘sensei’ when we’re not at school. You can just call me Aizawa.” He contemplated for a moment, before finishing. “Or Shouta, if you’d like.”

“I-If you’re sure, Aizawa-sen—.” Izuku stopped himself from saying the honorific midway through. Even though he had permission, he

couldn’t bring himself to call his teacher by his given name. His innate sense of politeness refused to let him. “Y-you can call m-me Izuku if… if you want.” He watched Aizawa’s face, checking if he’d overstepped some boundary he wasn’t aware of. Feeling bolstered by the man’s calm nod, he added with humor in his voice, “P-Problem Child is fine too.”

Aizawa snorted quietly, a soft smile playing at the corner of his mouth. “Alright, Problem Child.”

Chapter End Notes

This one hurt to write, but it was oh such sweet hurting! Izuku is going to get the help he needs, and Shouta and Hizashi are going to be great dads to our sweet broccoli boi! n.n

I keep going back and forth on how many chapters this will go, and at this point I just can't tell anymore. The original intent was around 10 chapters, but I've got so much more story to tell! I guess we'll just see where each chapter goes and end it when it's right.

Thank you all for the amazing comments, kudos, and everything else! I check the comments and stats for this work probably more than is healthy, but you all keep me going and excited to write the next chapter. :D

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku slowly picked through his dinner, his stomach churning unhappily at the third large helping of food that day. He swallowed slowly, fighting to get the mouthful down as his stomach rebelled against the rich food. After eating nothing but rice and steamed vegetables for almost a month, he was ill-prepared for the variety of options on the hospital tray, though the food was admittedly somewhat bland compared to any regular diet. Breakfast and lunch consisted of mostly rice with a light sauce, which Izuku was able to stomach with few problems (gurgling insides aside). Dinner, on the other hand, was spicier and much more exotic than anything he ate recently.

Izuku stared into the nearly cooled bowl of udon, willing himself to take another bite, but feeling the nausea welling up at the back of his throat. He was glad Aizawa stepped out of the room to speak with All Might and Recovery Girl when they arrived twenty minutes ago. The man was already privy to several embarrassing emotional outbursts and moments today, and Izuku didn't want to add vomiting to the list.

Setting down his wooden chopsticks, Izuku pulled his water bottle off the table tray and tentatively sipped at the cool liquid. His chin trembled slightly as the water hit his churning stomach. He closed his eyes and breathed slowly, willing the nausea to go away. *Don't throw up, don't throw up…* Izuku sipped at his water again, biting his lip as the trembling in his jaw increased. He breathed in deeply, feeling his stomach lurch as his mouth began watering profusely.

Izuku hastily pushed the tray table away, the bowl of udon spilling at least a quarter of the cold soup onto the table and blanket. The heart-rate monitor was yanked from his finger as Izuku sprinted to the bathroom with his free hand clamped tightly over his mouth. Sharp pain forked up his broken arm as he rushed across the room, causing his stomach to roll uncomfortably. He burst through the bathroom door and fell against the toilet, his body shaking as he emptied the contents of his stomach into the bowl.

The teen felt tears stinging his eyes and a burning in the back of his nose as he coughed up the remainder of the sickly bile into the toilet.

It took multiple heaves, but eventually his body calmed as settled. His forehead dropped to rest on his skinny arm as Izuku breathed slowly through the tremors that were slowly dissipating. He felt awful. Worse than before the final exam when he was vomiting every other day. At least then he didn't have to contend with a broken arm that hurt anytime he moved.

Izuku gazed bleary-eyed at the clean part of the toilet bowl, studiously ignoring the floating chunks of udon noodles and vegetables. His left arm throbbed painfully and his stomach still spasmed, but both pains began to fade as Izuku leaned against the porcelain, green eyes staring blankly into the distance as he fought to ignore the discomfort throughout his body. He tried thinking of something else while he breathed, his mind going into a semi-meditative state as his eyes flickered closed.

*His mother watched from the bathroom door, a frown between her well-manicured eyebrows and hand on her hip. "Izuku, what are you doing? You love those jelly dessert cups."*

*Izuku shuddered as he wiped his mouth and felt his stomach lurch again. "S-sorry, mom. I-I guess I'm just not f-feeling well today."*

*Inko huffed, throwing her hand up in the air and rolling her eyes as she strode out of the bathroom. Izuku heard the sound of her slippers disappear around the corner as she walked into the living room and the night's news broadcast started on the TV.*

*"Tonight we have a breaking story: a junior high school student was attacked by a Villain earlier today in what can only be described as a vicious attack. Several heroes arrived at the scene quickly, including up-and-coming hero Kamui Woods, but the victim's explosive quirk made a fast rescue impossible. Luckily for the young man, All Might arrived on scene…"*

*Izuku clenched his jaw as bile rose in his throat again. He glanced down at the mixture of sweet red gelatin and what could only be leftover slime from the villain. He heaved again, his stomach clenching painfully when nothing further was expelled. Tears traced down his freckled cheeks. Izuku whimpered at the tight feeling in his chest, feeling his vision narrow as he began to hyperventilate—*

A soft knock echoed in the tiled room, and Izuku's eyes slid open slowly. He stared blearily at the tiny shower curtain that separated the small shower from the toilet.

“Izuku?” Aizawa’s low voice sounded muffled through the mostly closed door. Izuku took several moments to re-orient himself, the memory leaving him feeling off-kilter and confused. Aizawa continued, “Is it alright if I come in?”

Izuku sniffed, the burn of bile still causing his nose and eyes to run. “Um,” Izuku coughed to clear his throat. “Y-you can c-come in.”

The door quietly swung open to allow Aizawa through. The dark-haired man’s eyes rapidly scanned Izuku’s hunched form, comprehension dawning quickly. He turned away from the door to mutter to someone in the other room, waited for a moment, then stepped fully into the large bathroom. Walking over to the paper towel dispenser with Izuku’s water bottle in hand, he pulled several sections of paper out.

Izuku hastily pushed the silver button on the toilet, flushing the contents away before Aizawa could see it. His cheeks grew warm with embarrassment. Green eyes looked anywhere but at Aizawa as he leaned back and propped himself up against the wall. His arms and legs shook notably.

Aizawa crouched in front of him, holding out the water bottle and asking, “Udon didn’t sit well?” Izuku shook his head slowly and reached for the bottle. He took a long drink from it, swishing the liquid around in his mouth to clear out the taste of bile before swallowing. He took the proffered paper towels and blew his nose, easing the sting in his sinuses. Aizawa gave him space to clean himself up and didn’t ask any further questions, only filling up the water bottle and grabbing more paper towels when needed.

Izuku leaned tiredly against the bathroom wall and just breathed. The cool tile of the floor and wall felt wonderful against his overheated skin as he waited for his stomach to settle completely. Aizawa wetted a paper towel, squeezing the excess water out until it was just damp, and handed it to Izuku with a quick, “Here.” The teen took it gratefully, wiping his face and neck to rid himself of the clammy sweat that gathered there.

The two sat in silence for several minutes while Izuku regained his equilibrium. Aizawa made no mention of the incident, simply waiting and filling up the water bottle when he could. Izuku appreciated the quiet, feeling too worn out from the emotional rollercoaster of the day. It was easier to pretend Aizawa wasn’t in the room when Izuku closed his eyes. His homeroom teacher was present for basically every

awkward moment Izuku had today, and the teen was beginning to wonder if this would just be how his life was until mom came back. Endless embarrassment in front of his two favorite teachers? Izuku felt like he'd rather be attacked by the slime villain again than have Present Mic and Eraserhead know exactly how useless he really was.

"Ready to go back in, kid?" Aizawa watched him from the shower seat across the bathroom, elbows propped on his thighs and fingers threaded together in front of his knees. His dark eyes showed no hint of impatience, simply watching the teen calmly.

Izuku wasn't ready, he felt he could sit in this quiet bathroom until the end times, but he nodded anyway. His shaking limbs protested as he tried to push himself up and found himself falling back against the tiled wall. A small huff of frustration escaped him as his prominent spine bumped hard against the tile, very little muscle or fat to cushion the impact. He winced, feeling himself slip into more deprecating thoughts that sounded suspiciously like Kaachan's voice. *Can't even stand up anymore, huh Deku? No hero could be this weak! Useless!*

A strong hand entered Izuku's line of sight, reaching out to help him up. He grit his teeth, wanting to reject the help and save his own pride, but knew he'd be stuck on the floor for at least an hour if he did. He begrudgingly reached out with his good arm, bracing his feet against the ground in preparation of standing. Aizawa grasped his arm just above the elbow and effortlessly pulled him upright. Izuku stumbled slightly into Aizawa as he regained his footing on shaky legs, bumping into the hero's chest. The man didn't seem to mind, simply steadying him with a hand on his back.

Izuku pulled away from the contact, feeling his legs steadying the longer he stood. He kept his face downcast, not wanting Aizawa to see the flush in his freckled cheeks. The man studied him for a moment, before swinging the door open for Izuku. Suddenly very aware that he was in a hospital gown which did not include pants, Izuku, as hastily as he could, walked into the main hospital room as Aizawa followed behind him. The hero stooped to pick up the half-filled water bottle, then hovered behind the teen, an arm held behind Izuku in support.

All Might stood by the door, watching as an orderly replaced the udon-covered sheets. Izuku exited the bathroom, feeling ashamed that he made such a mess. All Might smiled widely at him and waved with one of his overly-large hands, calling out, "Hey there, Young Midoriya!" His other hand was clutching a large gift bag that gave Izuku pause. Written across the bag was 'Happy Birthday!' in big,

exciting letters overtop a bunch of multicolored balloons. Izuku frowned slightly in thought, wondering who All Might was visiting that had a birthday today.

Not wanting to pry, Izuku smiled shyly at the number one hero and waved back. “H-hi, Yagi-san.”

The orderly finished redressing the bed and smiled at Izuku as he stood there awkwardly in his hospital gown. “All done! You can hop back in now.” The man’s long, bat-like ears twitched as Izuku thanked him, and then he was gone, dirty sheets tucked into a plastic bag and toted out with him.

Izuku slid back onto the bed, grabbing the heart rate monitor and managing to hold open the clamp long enough with his left hand to set his right index finger into place. He tossed the blanket over his bare legs, not looking at either man as he did.

Aizawa handed him his water and a granola bar. Thanking him, Izuku quietly unwrapped the snack and wondered where the hero got it. There certainly wasn’t one on his dinner tray, which he noted was also gone.

All Might sat in the chair on Izuku’s right, dropping the birthday gift on the floor beside him. “Feeling better?”

The teen wasn’t sure what exactly he was referring to. He felt terrible all day and vomiting only made that worse. He nodded anyway, smiling slightly to waylay any worry the man may have. He didn’t want to be a bother.

Yagi smiled widely, his bright white teeth showing. “That’s good! I’m glad you’re doing better,” he exclaimed, blue eyes sparkling. Izuku saw Aizawa walking over to the door, dark eyes reading something on his phone. The pro hero was about to slide the door open when Yagi’s voice lowered seriously, “However! I’ve got a bone to pick with you, Young Man.”

Izuku’s green eyes widened at All Might’s words, wondering what was going on. He caught sight of Aizawa pausing at the door and glaring curiously at the blond skeleton. Izuku stuttered, “W-what? I d-don’t—”

Yagi tossed his hands in the air exuberantly, “Why did you tell me your birthday was on Wednesday?!”

Aizawa rolled his eyes and exited through the open door. Izuku’s mind

went blank as he registered what Yagi said. *Birthday…? It isn't my birthday yet…is it?* He quickly counted the days since he last remembered writing a date, eyes widening as he realized he forgot his own birthday in the stress of finals and everything else. "I…forgot?" Izuku muttered, completely blindsided.

Yagi laughed heartily, "Come on, kid! Your sixteenth?" He shook his head with a big smile, grabbing the large bag on the floor and dropping it into Izuku's lap. "Happy birthday, Young Midoriya!"

The stunned teen stared at the present, then stared at All Might with his jaw slack. "You…you got me a present?"

The blond man beamed, exclaiming, "Open it!"

Izuku stuttered, "O-Okay…" He slowly untied the string handles and pulled open the bag, peeking inside at the contents. He blinked, green eyes roving over a fancy pen and notebook that sat on top of a large fluffy blanket. A slow smile crept over Izuku's face as he examined the unexpected birthday gift. He turned to his mentor, mumbling a sincere thank you and pulling the notebook and pen out of the bag so he could examine them. The pen and notebook were far nicer than any of the ones Izuku owned, and his initials were inscribed on the pen cap and leather cover respectively. He flipped through the thick pages of the notebook, relishing in the smell of fresh paper.

"I remembered your analysis notebooks," Yagi started, watching Izuku fawn over his new gifts, "and I thought maybe you could use a notebook to analyze your own quirk."

Izuku nodded, "I-I like that idea." He paused for a moment, frowning and biting his lip. He glanced up at Yagi's blue eyes with concern, "But, shouldn't I k-keep One for All secret? What i-if someone found this and r-realized what it meant?"

Yagi winked and threw a thumbs up at Izuku. "I hear underground heroes are *very* good at encoded messages. Maybe you can ask Aizawa to teach you?"

Izuku nodded furiously, "Y-yeah! And m-maybe I can get some books about it…" The teen trailed off as he caught sight of the large blanket still in the bag. The blanket was folded, but part of the main design was visible on the topmost fold. Izuku's brain short circuited as he recognized the pattern. Hastily putting the notebook to the side, he tore the blanket out from the bag and unfolded it so he could see the entire thing. Before him lay one of *the* special edition, limited run,

silver age All Might Cozy-Closet exclusive blankets. Izuku immediately began muttering to himself in excitement, eyes roving over the silver age costume inspired design, “These go for over one-hundred thousand yen in collector’s auctions! And that’s the ones at the end of the limited run, numbers sixty through one-hundred! The closer you get to number one, the higher the price! These things are nearly impossible to find, and any number below thirty are already stored in top tier collections, never open to the public! Number zero-zero-two sold for over two million yen three years ago! And this one is number,” Izuku searched the hem of the soft blanket for the stitched lettering. He choked as he caught sight of the number, eyes bugging out wider than he thought possible. “Number zero-zero-one out of one-hundred!”

All Might laughed uproariously as Izuku’s whole body froze and he fell back against the inclined bed, green eyes staring unseeing into the ceiling in his shock. “Woah there, kid! Don’t have a heart attack on me!”

“The first item of every All Might product line was always given to All Might himself, which means this is All Might’s personal blanket!” Izuku shot up again, gathering up as much of the blanket as he could and pushing it towards the blond hero. “You can’t give this to me, All Might! This is a precious collectors item that you can’t get anywhere else! No one knows how much zero-zero-one would cost if it went on auction, so that means it’s priceless! You can’t give something like this away to just anybody!”

Yagi’s eyes widened at Izuku’s ferocious zeal. He put both hands up in a gesture of surrender, smiling face incredibly bright as he yelled back, trying to be heard over the teen’s insistent mutter storm, “It’s yours now, Young Midoriya! No take-backsies!”

“But All Might, this item is PRICELESS!”

“And it’s yours!” Yagi laughed at Izuku’s almost desperate expression, “I want you to have it, kid!”

Izuku opened his mouth to argue, but pulled up short. He was, if nothing else, incredibly polite. His mother had drilled that into his head since the very beginning. Seeing no other method of recourse, he searched Yagi’s face with glistening green eyes. Quietly, he murmured, “A-Are you sure, Yagi-san?”

“Absolutely, kid,” Yagi chortled, blue eyes crinkling in good humor.

Izuku's face scrunched as he tried to keep the happy tears from falling. Instead, he gathered the blanket against his chest with his one good arm and buried his cheeks in the soft red fabric. Voice muffled, Izuku mumbled, "Thank you…"

The Number One Hero beamed at his student, glad to see him acting more like himself. Aizawa kept himself, Recovery Girl, and Present Mic apprised of Izuku's mental state for most of the day, and every time he reported Izuku breaking down or acting despondent, it felt like a knife in Yagi's gut. Young Midoriya was such a ray of sunshine in his life, he hadn't put much thought to the teen's own mental health, but now it was at the forefront of Yagi's mind. This kid deserved the world, and Yagi intended to bring that to him one step at a time, even if all he could do was help replenish Izuku's hero merch collection. When Aizawa informed them of what Izuku did to keep himself fed, Yagi was furious. No child should have to go to such lengths, and no self-respecting parent should put their child in that position on purpose. Yagi, though generally amiable with everyone, didn't know what he'd do if he saw Midoriya Inko and was secretly glad she was nowhere to be found at this moment.

Aizawa slowly slid the door open as he balanced a food tray with one hand. He stepped gingerly into the room, raising an eyebrow at the large silver-age All Might blanket currently camouflaging his ward. He turned to Yagi as he walked to Izuku's left side and placed the tray on the table. He grumbled, "You got him your own hero merch?"

Yagi seemed about to answer, but both men paused as they heard Izuku mumble from beneath the enormous blanket, "...I'll pass this down as a precious heirloom to my grandchildren's grandchildren…"

The blond hero burst out laughing and Aizawa narrowly avoided doing so himself, dark eyes full of humor as he gazed at the pile of fabric that contained Midoriya Izuku. "Better put the 'precious heirloom' away while you eat, Problem Child. Wouldn't want to soil it for the future generations."

Izuku's mop of green curls popped out of the blanket pile and he glanced up at Aizawa, confused. The underground hero raised an eyebrow, nodding to the bowl of plain rice and steamed vegetables he brought with him.

"O-oh!" Izuku hastily folded the blanket reverently, gently sliding it back into the gift bag with the notebook and pen. He bowed quickly to the number one hero, saying politely, "Thank you very much, Yagi-

san!”

“You’re very welcome,” Yagi chuckled.

Aizawa pushed the table into place in front of Izuku and handed him fresh chopsticks. “Try to eat as much as you can. This should sit better than the udon.”

Izuku nodded and began to eat the simple dinner. Once he started, he quickly realized how hungry he was and dug into the rice with gusto. Yagi entertained him with the story of Bakugo and Kirishima’s practical exam while Aizawa continued working his way through the stack of training plans.

“I forgot how large young Bakugo’s explosions are with those gauntlets and misjudged the distance! He came flying at me after that! Ha ha!”

Yagi and Izuku continued talking after Izuku finished eating most of the bowl. His stomach was so full by the last quarter of the rice that Izuku couldn’t hardly swallow any more. They analyzed several of the other practical exams for nearly an hour before the door opened again to admit Recovery Girl.

The elderly nurse smiled gently at Izuku as she walked up to his bedside with a clipboard. “Good evening, Midoriya. Are you ready to fix that arm?”

Izuku nodded excitedly, though feeling slight trepidation at the thought of what came *after* his arm was healed. Recovery Girl hummed happily as she checked his vitals and had him explain various facets of his physical health.

“And you ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner?” She watched Izuku while also glancing at Aizawa. Both nodded. “Good! Well, young man, I think we’ll be able to get you mostly healed today. You’ll probably need to sleep after I use my quirk, so is there anything you wanted to do before I proceed?”

Izuku thought for a moment before pulling the All Might blanket out of the gift bag again. He draped it over himself before smiling shyly at Recovery Girl. “I-I’m ready.”

The hero nurse kissed his hand and Izuku immediately felt a wave of exhaustion pass over him accompanied by the instant relief of his bones fusing back together. He slumped back against the pillows,

green eyes fluttering shut and just catching Yagi's quiet, "Good night, kid."

Chapter End Notes

Hello again! Hope everyone is feeling good and keeping safe. I was intending to post this chapter on Sunday, but would you look at that. It's Wednesday. My only excuse is Attack on Titan. I watched the new episode. It grabbed me. It ate me. That's all I got.

Izuku and Aizawa start to get more comfortable and Aizawa realizes a few things about our sweet broccoli boi. Next chapter we get to finally leave this freaking hospital and get Izuku a new home! :D Hooray!

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Aizawa sighed as he read through the rest of Midoriya's discharge papers before signing his name at the bottom and adding a date. He was tired. Despite bringing his obnoxious sleeping bag to the hospital with him, Shouta slept fitfully. He was quite used to sleeping in odd places, hard floors and chairs being his preferred locations when at school, but the hospital chair he tried to enter the land of unconsciousness in was another thing entirely. Not even sleeping in helped. Midoriya didn't wake up until almost noon, and Shouta still couldn't get a moment of good shut-eye.

He finished signing the stack of papers and twisted his upper body on the cushy waiting room bench, feeling and hearing a satisfying crack as he did. Returning to a normal sitting position, Shouta watched through the glass as Izuku's doctor helped him up onto the x-ray table and instructed him to lay still. The doctor brought the x-ray machine over the kid's left arm, still in the thick cast from his surgery, then walked to the other side of a thick screen. The dark-haired man watched as Izuku laid perfectly still until Dr. Yamashita rounded the screen again. She helped Izuku down from the table and they both returned to where Aizawa sat.

The door made a soft whooshing noise as they entered. The smiling doctor pointed to where Aizawa was sitting, "Go ahead and take a seat while I get those x-rays loaded up, Midoriya-kun."

Izuku nodded, sitting next to Aizawa with a polite amount of space between them. His legs bounced up and down against the tile floor nervously. Shouta could tell Recovery Girl's quirk had done quite a bit of good for the kid. The teen no longer sat stiffly, as if every movement hurt. Instead, he was much more fluid, though still slow from lack of energy and strength.

"Alright," Dr. Yamashita hit a few buttons on her computer before flipping the power switch on the screen built into the wall. The black and white x-rays flickered into view, showing Izuku's arm, shoulder, and part of his torso. "From what Recovery Girl said, she couldn't heal everything without risking a coma. It looks like she was able to focus most of the healing on your upper arm," she pointed at the bone in

question. “You can see the bone is solid here now, but down in the forearm,” her hand moved downward, pointing at tiny, spider webbing lines on the white bone, “there’s still some breaks.”

Izuku stuttered, “S-so I still need to wear this cast?” His green eyes reflected strangely as he gazed at the backlit x-ray image.

Dr. Yamashita smiled reassuringly, “You’ll still need a cast, but we can get you into a much smaller one now. And,” she looked at the x-ray again, “I think you’ll only need to wear it for a couple weeks.”

Aizawa frowned at that. “Can Recovery Girl not heal it fully in a day or so?”

The doctor shook her head, a few strands of brown hair loosening from her tight bun. “Recovery Girl thinks it’s best to let Midoriya-kun heal naturally for the rest due to his malnutrition. Major energy drains like this could potentially cause problems further down the road. Recovery Girl did as much as she thought she could without hitting that threshold.”

Shouta nodded in understanding, catching sight of Izuku studiously looking at his hospital slippers with his plump lip firmly between his teeth.

Dr. Yamashita smiled at Aizawa, then turned to Izuku. “Did you have any questions, Midoriya-kun?”

The teen’s eyes shot up to meet the doctors, then he hastily shook his head, saying, “Oh…um…n-no, I don’t h-have any questions.”

The doctor took them to another room, where Aizawa watched them take off the enormous white cast and replace it with a more typical one that only went just past his elbow. A different nurse than Izuku’s usual one helped wrap the plaster cast in the blue-colored bandage Izuku picked out as well as help Izuku into a sling for his arm.

Once they were finished, Dr. Yamashita walked them back to Izuku’s room. She addressed Shouta as they walked through the white hallways. “Aizawa-san, if you’ve finished with Midoriya-kun’s discharge paperwork, then I believe we’ve done everything we can here, and Midoriya-kun can go home. Just drop the paperwork off at the front desk as you’re leaving.”

Shouta thanked the doctor before sliding the door open for Izuku to walk in first. An exuberant voice that he recognized quite well

shouted from inside, “Hey, little listener!”

“Oh! Um…hello, Yamada-sensei,” Izuku mumbled, waving at the blond, moving to the side of his bed, and grabbing the birthday present from All Might and his yellow backpack. He turned to look uncertainly between Shouta and Hizashi.

Shouta slid the door shut and surveyed the room. Hizashi sat in the plastic chair Shouta *tried* to sleep in this morning, a bright grin on his face and green eyes gleaming behind his square-framed glasses. On the floor next to him was the yellow sleeping bag folded up into its travel satchel, a pair of red boots he recognized as Izuku’s, and a plastic bag containing a neatly folded UA uniform and another set of clothes.

Both of the room’s other occupants watched Shouta, waiting to hear what came next. He sighed internally, blinking tiredly and grumbling, “As soon as you’re dressed we can leave.”

Hizashi, excitement gleaming in his eyes, hastily produced the plastic bag of clothes and Izuku’s red boots. “I grabbed your uniform from school and also found something more comfortable if you’d rather not wear the uniform. It’s pretty hot out, ya dig?”

Izuku stuttered out his thanks, taking the bag and making a quick retreat to the bathroom. Aizawa watched him, glad to see some amount of steadiness returning to his walk. There was also an absence of wincing, proof that Izuku’s arm was in far better condition than last night.

Shouta’s dark eyes slid over to meet Hizashi’s green one, which held a soft smile in them. He felt some of the tension in his shoulders ease as he sent a small smile to his husband. The Eraser Hero was more than ready to leave this hospital and not return for at least a year.

Hizashi held up Shouta’s cat thermos, wiggling it enticingly with a glint of humor in his eyes. “Coffee, Shou?”

Shouta snatched the thermos from his husband and immediately took several long swigs from it, uncaring that the liquid was too hot and burned his mouth slightly. He groaned as the caffeine hit his system, “You’re perfect.”

Hizashi laughed loudly, “Did you even sleep last night? You’re not usually this delirious.”

Shouta glared at the blond hero, grumbling as he took another sip and glanced around at the room, “That chair is a menace…”

Hizashi continued to laugh, smiling brightly. Shouta rolled his eyes and changed the subject. “Where did the extra clothes come from?” He sincerely hoped they weren’t from his own closet. He and Izuku would both never survive the embarrassment.

Green eyes sparkled happily, “I bought them!”

“Please tell me you’ve already completed your shopping spree, and I don’t have to go,” Shouta deadpanned.

Hizashi pretended to take offense, “Shopping spree without my favorite victim? Shou, do you even know me?” He tossed his arm dramatically across his face, scoffing at his husband’s obvious eye roll.

The bathroom door creaked open slowly as Izuku poked his head out, green eyes nervously flicking around the room before he stepped out from around the door. Hizashi grinned at him, calling out, “Hey, listener! Those clothes fit okay?”

Izuku stammered, “Um…y-yeah, they’re p-perfect. Thank you, Yamada-sensei.” His hand fiddled with the end of the red Hawks t-shirt as the plastic bag with his UA uniform gently bounced against his dark gray shorts.

Hizashi’s eyes practically sparkled as he looked over the outfit he’d picked for Izuku, glad he was able to find a shirt that matched the color of his boots. “Awesome! All ready to go then?”

Izuku nodded, depositing the used hospital garments on the end of his neatly made bed. He glanced between his backpack, the birthday gift from All Might, and the bag with his school uniform, calculating how best to carry it all.

“I’ll take your backpack, listener, if you wanna hold onto your gift,” Hizashi smiled, handing the sleeping bag to Shouta and reaching out a hand to Izuku. The teen smiled back nervously and hefted the heavy bag over to the blond hero, who took it with a huff. “Dang! Is it this heavy all the time?” He laughed jovially.

Izuku blushed lightly, turning his eyes away and mumbling, “I l-like having all my notebooks…”

Aizawa led them out of the room, eyes scanning for any missed items before sliding the door shut behind them. He sipped his coffee as they entered the elevator, listening to Hizashi and Izuku's quiet chatter as the metal door closed and they began to descend.

"So, what's in these notebooks? Just school notes?"

Izuku swung the plastic bag against his leg gently as he replied, "It's… um…I like a-analyzing quirks. I w-write it in my n-notebooks."

"Yeah?" Hizashi grinned, glancing at Shouta with an excited look in his eye and winking. "Just any quirks?"

"M-mostly heroes' quirks I saw on TV," Izuku admitted, feeling the edge of nervousness ebbing slightly as he relaxed into talking about his favorite topic. "B-but my newest notebook has most of the UA teachers and some of my classmates too. Y-Yaoyarozu's quirk is really interesting, and Monoma in Class 1-B too. Copy quirks are really hard to analyze because they're so different, but it's like a challenge! I just w-wish he liked 1-A better so I could talk to him about his quirk sometime…"

Aizawa stepped out of the elevator first, dark eyes scanning the hallway for directions to the front desk. Spotting the entrance to the hospital quickly, he paced over to leave the stack of papers with the receptionist.

"Discharge paperwork for Midoriya Izuku," he grumbled, half listening to Izuku mutter happily away behind him about Snipe's quirk. Aizawa noted that the teen's stuttering was significantly lessened while he talked with Hizashi about quirks, and the pro wondered what the cause of the stuttering was in the first place. Lack of self-confidence?

The receptionist shuffled through each of the papers, checking for the appropriate signatures before smiling at Shouta. "Everything is good to go. Thank you, sir."

Aizawa nodded, returning to his husband and ward. Hizashi asked, "You got me and Shouta in your notebook too?"

Izuku's freckled cheeks flushed red as he looked at the floor in embarrassment. He nodded.

"Maybe we can take a look and give you some pointers then!" Hizashi led them out of the hospital and out into the sunny parking lot.

Aizawa glared at the sky, his eyes already beginning to hurt from the bright rays.

The trio walked for a short way before the Voice Hero announced, “Here we are!” He clicked a button on his key fob and a small *beep* sounded from an unassuming black car. Aizawa tossed the sleeping bag into the back before opening the front door and sitting in the passenger seat. He opened the glove compartment, quickly pulling out his sunglasses and putting them on. Relief immediately washed over his aching eyes.

Hizashi placed Izuku’s backpack next to the sleeping bag, and waved at the empty seats. “Hop in!” Hizashi sat behind the wheel, and Izuku slid gingerly into the seat behind him. The green-eyed teen glanced around him, feeling awkward but also incredibly curious. The back windows were tinted heavily, making the back seat very dark, but Izuku could still see that the car was quite clean except for a few stray cat hairs that stood out against the black fabric. In the front, the blond hero exchanged his square-frame glasses for his iconic Present Mic shades.

Passing his phone back to Izuku, Hizashi grinned, “Put your address in?” The teen fumbled to type his address into his teacher’s GPS, fighting the feeling of unreality surrounding this whole situation. He was sitting in a car with Present Mic and Eraserhead, two of his favorite heroes and teachers, on their way to his bare-bones apartment to pack his meager belongings and move in with them. Izuku didn’t know how to feel. Excited? A little. Apprehensive? Absolutely. Nervous? Incredibly so.

Phone programmed to lead them to Izuku’s apartment, Hizashi quickly reversed the black car out of the parking spot with ease. He shifted into drive, and the three pulled away from Musutafu General. They sped along a large road that connected Musutafu General to the rest of the city, making their way through traffic as a robotic voice directed them where to go.

Aizawa watched Izuku out of the corner of his eye during the 15-minute drive to the kid’s apartment. His common nervous tics were on full display: bottom lip pinched between his teeth, fingers tugging at the fabric of his shorts just above the knee, knee bouncing up and down as they drove.

Turning slightly in his seat to face Izuku, Aizawa slipped his sunglasses onto his head. “Recovery Girl and Dr. Yamashita agreed

you could go to the summer camp next week," he started, trying to keep his voice light and friendly. Well, as light and friendly as he got, which was not much, to say the least. Izuku's big green eyes turned to stare at him with a small spark of excitement hidden among the anxiety. "Do you need anything from the list I gave out in class?"

Izuku gripped the fabric of his pants tighter as he tried to remember everything that was on the list. It consisted mostly of the kinds of clothing they should have: outdoors clothing, hiking boots, jackets for cool weather. He hadn't paid much attention to anything else on the list because he'd had no money at the time to buy any of it. Stuttering, Izuku replied, "I…um…I think I h-have everything."

Aizawa quirked an eyebrow, "Sleeping bag? Water bottle? Sunscreen?"

Izuku bit his lip. He didn't want to lie, so he shook his head slowly. The sleeping bag, which he now remembered was at the top of his list, was far more expensive than he expected. Consequently, he didn't buy one. He figured he could survive a couple weeks with just a thick blanket and a pillow.

Aizawa nodded, glancing at Hizashi who had a huge grin on his face. "We'll get you whatever you're missing, then." He turned back to face out the front window.

"Yeah! There's a great place in the mall for this kind of stuff! We can go this week sometime so you've got everything," Hizashi beamed at Izuku from the front seat, his face reflected in the rearview mirror.

"O-okay," Izuku mumbled. "B-but I can p-pay for it, Aizawa-sensei. Y-you don't have to p-pay for me."

"You don't have to call me sensei outside of school, Problem Child," Aizawa gently reminded him. Izuku bit his lip and looked at his lap as the dark-haired man continued, "And it's something you need for the summer camp, so we'll pay for it."

Izuku felt guilt settling in his stomach at the thought of his teachers spending so much on him unnecessarily. Stumbling over his words and waving his hand in front of him, he replied, "R-really! I promise I can pay for it myself! I don't want to in-inconvenience you both!"

Aizawa turned back in his seat to see his young ward better in the back seat. The teen's leg was bouncing faster and his knuckles were white as he gripped the fabric of his pants. Quiet but firm, he said,

“You are *not* an inconvenience to either myself or Hizashi.” He locked eyes with Izuku as he said it, making sure his full meaning was understood. He saw Hizashi glancing at him from the corner of his eye, but kept his focus on the uncertain teen in the back seat.

“I know all these changes are very sudden, but we both signed up to make sure you were taken care of. As far as we’re concerned, giving you a safe place to live, keeping you fed and healthy, and making sure you have everything you need is *our* responsibility.”

Aizawa paused for a moment. He was saying more words in this single car ride than he’d probably said all day. His dark eyes scanned Izuku’s face, making sure his tone wasn’t too intense. He was glad to see the kid’s eyes were dry, though he did have a slightly shocked look on his face. Softening his tone and facial expression, Shouta continued, “*Your* responsibility is to get good grades, keep your room clean, and play with the cat. Think you can do that for me, Problem Child?”

Izuku thought for moment before a soft smile twitched at the edges of his mouth as he nodded, saying, “I-I think so.”

“Alright then,” Aizawa replied, turning back to look out the front window and pulling his dark sunglasses down over his eyes again. Then he said in a half-serious deadpan, “Playing with the cat comes before good grades and room cleaning.”

Hizashi started cackling as Izuku failed to stifle his own laugh. If the teen wasn’t 100% certain that Aizawa’s only facial expression was neutrally bored, he could’ve sworn the man looked proud of himself.

The trio continued to drive for another few minutes before Izuku started to recognize his neighborhood and was able to direct the Voice Hero to the guest parking at his apartment. The green-haired teen unclipped his house key from inside the front pocket of his backpack, then awkwardly slid out of the car, still not used to maneuvering with his broken arm. Aizawa and Yamada pulled several cardboard boxes out of the trunk before turning to Izuku to lead the way.

“Which apartment building is yours, listener?” The blond man smiled, pushing his yellow shades higher up on his nose. Izuku pointed to the middle building with the large number 2 on the side, and the three started making their way towards it.

Izuku still felt slightly uncomfortable leading his two teachers to his apartment, even after feeling reassured during his conversation with Aizawa in the car. He felt more grounded in what was expected of him

in this situation, but not even All Might had seen the inside of his apartment before. This was new, awkward territory.

Hand shaking slightly from nerves, Izuku fumbled with the lock on his door. They were all breathing harder after climbing the three flights of stairs. Izuku tried not to feel embarrassed about the broken elevator, but it was difficult. He wanted to make a good impression, even though they were about to pack everything away and leave. The thought cause butterflies to explode in his stomach.

Finally feeling the 'click' of the lock, Izuku hesitantly opened the door and flicked on the hall light, letting the two pro heroes into his apartment. The entryway was devoid of anything except Izuku's own house slippers and his favorite hoodie hung up on the coat hooks. Feeling his face flush, he stammered, "S-sorry, I don't h-have guest s-slippers."

Hizashi set down the boxes he carried and leaned against the wall to remove his shoes. "No problem! I can rock around in socks just fine!"

Aizawa silently removed his own shoes, then followed Izuku to the first door along the hallway. It held a sign hanging from a pin that spelled 'Izuku's room' in various hero-themed alphabet stickers. The sign looked to be several years old judging by the peeling of the stickers and the heroes depicted on them. Aizawa glanced at Hizashi, knowing the man would probably be fit to burst. The blond man was beaming at the door, a bright sparkle in his eye as he signed at Shouta, 'So cute!'

Izuku muttered as he opened the door, "M-most of my s-stuff is in here…"

Hizashi and Aizawa walked into the small room, not sure what to expect. The hallway was completely empty. There were small discolored square sections of the wall that showed where pictures used to hang, but were now gone. The bedroom they entered was not nearly as empty, but certainly more clean than any teenage boy's room should be. Multiple shelves mounted on the walls were empty of the nicknacks that should've been displayed there, as well as the multitude of pin holes in the walls where posters were tacked up.

Aizawa felt that familiar anger in his gut as he remembered the immense list of items Izuku showed him in his notebook. He could imagine this room stuffed to the brim with hero merchandise and arranged to perfectly display each and every item. Now the room felt

devoid of any flair. Lifeless.

Setting down his bundle of cardboard boxes, Aizawa sipped at his coffee and asked, “Is the bathroom just down the hall, kid?”

Izuku nodded, pointing towards where they saw the kitchen upon entering. “It’s past the kitchen, on the right.”

Aizawa left the bedroom, muttering that he’d be right back, and walked through the rest of the house. He pulled out his phone and snapped several pictures of the empty hallway and living room, the barren fridge, and the empty bedroom that must have been Izuku’s mother’s. He could still spot the indents on the carpet where her dresser and bed sat. The room told him all he needed to know about Midoriya Inko’s intentions. She was never coming back.

He finished his impromptu tour in the bathroom, taking pictures of the empty cabinets and linen closet. Not even a first aid kit remained in the bathroom, just a lone toothbrush and Izuku’s shampoo. He sent the bunch of photos to Tsukauchi with a quick text.

*Eraserhead: [8 Pictures Attached] It looks like Midoriya-san took most of the furniture when she left.*

Shouta quickly finished his business in the bathroom and was washing his hands when Tsukauchi returned his text.

LiarLiar: I imagine she sold it all. I found a plane ticket booked in her name around the time Midoriya-kun says she left. It was headed to America.

Shouta cursed quietly as he read the text. If she left the country there was very little they could do to actually bring her into the Musutafu Police Precinct. Child abandonment was a punishable offense in Japan, and they could have an active warrant for her arrest if she ever returned, but it wasn’t something they had an extradition order with the United States for.

LiarLiar: Do you think Midoriya-kun would be able to talk to me at some point? I’d like to get his statement for the case file, but I understand if he doesn’t want to talk about it.

*Eraserhead: I’ll ask. Don’t expect it to be soon though.*

LiarLiar: Of course. I don’t want to interrupt him settling in.

Shouta slid the phone back into his pocket before returning to Izuku's room to find Hizashi exclaiming over a small yellow radio set. "I can't believe you have one of these! This was the first Put Your Hands Up Radio merch ever made, and you kept it in great condition!"

Izuku was blushing as he packed neatly folded shirts into a duffle bag. "I-it was a birthday present from my grandfather b-before he passed away. I h-had to re-wire it a few t-times to keep it working."

Hizashi handed the radio set to Izuku and pulled out his phone. "Here, can I take a picture of you with it? My station manager doesn't believe any of these still exist!"

Izuku blinked several times before smiling shyly, holding up the radio with his good arm, the words, "Put your HANDS UP!" visible across the face of the yellow plastic. One of the dials had a worn image of Hizashi in the earliest iteration of his Present Mic costume. Izuku held the smile and radio while Hizashi snapped a few pictures, then put it into the open box next to Hizashi.

Aizawa set his thermos on a shelf by the door and grabbed an empty box. He joined Hizashi by the only full shelf in the room, one covered in various textbooks, notebooks, and hero magazines. He started to move everything into the box when his husband yelled, "Think fast, Shou!" and threw a small object at him. Reflexes kicking in, he snatched the item out of the air before it hit him in the eye, sending a small glare at the grinning blond.

"What was—" He glanced at the object in his hand, his train of thought coming to a stop as he recognized a cartoon version of his own hero costume and face. His brows pulled together. "Is this…?"

"It's an eraser head!" Hizashi chortled as he finished packing his box and set it to the side.

Shouta stared dumbfounded at the small square eraser with his own hero image emblazoned across it. The small paper wrapped around it even looked like his capture weapon.

"I-I found it at a hero convention, um…two years ago? Th-there was a booth for underground heroes that this n-nice lady was running." Izuku thought for a moment. "I don't t-think she sold very much of h-her stuff, because she wasn't there the year a-after."

"Interesting…" Aizawa grunted as he handed the eraser back to Hizashi. He felt oddly flattered that someone had taken the time to

make hero merch for *him* of all people.

“I w-was really excited to find it, actually,” Izuku muttered, seemingly more confident in this topic of conversation and less nervous. He continued emptying his closet as he spoke, “B-because your quirk basically makes you fight quirkless against villains, which I-I always thought was really cool. Not m-many heroes fight that way…”

Shouta hummed as he filled the rest of the box and folded the top closed. “It certainly gives me an advantage in most situations.”

The trio continued packing Izuku’s meager belongings as they discussed heroes and quirks. Hizashi was able to keep the teen talking on the subject for a long time, and the topic seemed to keep Izuku’s mind off of whatever was making him nervous. Aizawa listened mostly, but took mental notes to test the teen’s analysis skills at some point. Several times during the conversation, Aizawa was impressed by the attention to detail he showed towards the use of quirks in hero work. It was significantly better than the level he expected out of his first year class.

After about a half-hour, the three fully packed Izuku’s bedroom. The small stack of boxes barely reached the top of the coat rack in the hall. They moved to the rest of the house, which consisted of a single box containing the green-haired teen’s bathroom things, as well as his bento box and chopsticks.

Taking a moment to do a final check, Aizawa motioned at the bed and desk in Izuku’s bedroom. “We have a bed, desk, and dresser ready for you, but would you prefer to have your own?”

Izuku looked over the remaining furniture, feeling an odd sense of nostalgia. “W-will it just stay here u-until my m-mom comes back?”

Aizawa didn’t know how to reply. He was certain Midoriya Inko intended never to return, but he also knew that it would take some time to convince Izuku of that fact and now was not the time. Mulling it over in his head, he sighed, “If we can’t get ahold of your mother before the rent she paid is up, your landlord will probably have to remove it so she can rent this apartment out again.”

Izuku bit his lip, looking at the room he lived in for the last eight years. Though he felt connected to it, the connection wasn’t nearly as strong as he thought it would be. The room didn’t even look like his anymore, stripped of all the hero merch and his things. Pausing momentarily, he muttered quietly, “I-I guess that’s fine.”

Shouta watched his ward's face carefully, seeing a glint of sadness in the kid's green eyes. "If you'd like to keep it," he said gently, "we can take it. Rent a truck."

Izuku shook his head, picking up his folded All Might comforter and turning to leave the room. "N-no, that's okay." He stepped out into the hallway where Hizashi was picking up another couple of boxes to take downstairs. "Maybe the next tennants can use it?"

Shouta followed the teen out, pulling his shoes on before picking up the remaining bags and his thermos. "I'm sure they can," he grunted. Izuku checked all the lights were off before following Shouta and Hizashi out of the apartment. He locked the door, stooping to pick up the spare key from beneath the doormat. They all shuffled down the flights of stairs, encumbered by the bags and boxes that barely fit into the trunk and backseat.

Hizashi pulled them out of the guest parking and began the drive to their home. He tried to chat with Izuku, but the teen had returned to his nervousness and seemed more despondent than before.

*It's just until mom gets home,* Izuku thought as he stared out the window. He thought he spotted Kaachan walking down the sidewalk between their houses. He tore his eyes away from the window just as the explosive blond turned to watch the car curiously. *Just until she comes home.* He wasn't sure if he was trying to comfort or convince himself.

Chapter End Notes

Well, we didn't *quite* get out of the hospital this chapter, but we're so close! I really enjoyed writing mumble-storm fanboy Izuku, he's super funny.

Hope you enjoyed! I did the smart thing this time and wrote the chapter BEFORE the next Attack on Titan episode came out, so I could actually focus on this story instead of the show haha! :D

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku stared around the new room as he sat on a twin-sized bed, his light-headedness from going up and down the stairs to the apartment beginning to dissipate. The room was larger than the one he just emptied by a significant amount, with a bed, a dresser, side table, and desk. A series of shelves above the desk now sat full with his notebooks and what little remained of his hero merch. Izuku ran his hand absentmindedly over the blanket All Might gifted him as his green eyes scanned the room. The soft fibers gave him some measure of comfort as he accustomed himself to the new surroundings.

A soft padding sound came from the floor near the bedroom door, and he turned to catch a glimpse of a tan-colored cat trodding into the room. Izuku stared at the cat, remembering Aizawa called her Tofu before and didn't move from his spot on the bed. The cat was'hiding,' as Yamada had put it, for the last half hour as the two pro heroes helped Izuku unpack. With Aizawa and Yamada two floors down grabbing the last few duffle bags, the teen was unsure what to do. His brief interaction with his old neighbor's cat years ago hardly counted for anything as the aged feline refused to acknowledge him most of the time.

Curious yellow eyes examined the room as the tan cat explored. Izuku watched her silently, his head on a swivel but otherwise unmoving. He felt completely drained after packing and unpacking his things, despite the 30-minute car ride from his apartment to Aizawa and Yamada's home. It clearly showed on his face earlier, because Aizawa fixed him with a look, pointed at the bed, and said, "Sit down before you fall over, Problem Child."

Tofu carefully approached Izuku's slipper-clad feet, nosing around the guest slippers he wore and sniffing him. She looked up, yellow eyes flicking between him and a spot on the bed next to him, before jumping to land on top of the squishy mattress. Izuku slowly offered the back of his hand up for her to sniff like he saw people do with dogs. He wasn't exactly sure of what he was doing, but Tofu leaned in to sniff at him, so he thought he might be doing something right. Seeming bored of him already, Tofu dropped to the floor after sniffing his blanket, then hopped up on top of the desk.

Izuku heard the front door open and Yamada saying, “Dinner in thirty? I’m starving.”

“Sure,” Aizawa grunted. “As long as it isn’t curry again”

“Hey! That curry was delicious!”

“Not after having it all week.”

Yamada humphed as they both turned the corner into Izuku’s new bedroom carrying the remaining duffle bags that contained his clothes. The blond man set his bags down and smiled brightly at Izuku, a strand of hair loose from his bun. “That’s the last of it, listener! Oh!” Yamada spotted the cat licking her front paw on the desk. “Looks like Tofu came out to say hello. That’s rockin! Usually she’s pretty shy.”

He scratched behind Tofu’s ears, then turned to leave. “I’ll go get dinner ready. Any requests, kiddo?” His green eyes twinkled behind square-framed glasses. Izuku shook his head, knowing anything he would *actually* like to eat right now wouldn’t sit well with him.

“Alright! Stir fry it is!” Yamada left with another smile and Izuku soon heard a radio begin playing as the sounds of pots and pans moving echoed from what he assumed was the kitchen.

Aizawa sighed as he set the remaining bags down, tucking his long hair behind his ears. Turning to look at Izuku, the usually strict stare he used in class significantly softened, he asked, “Still lightheaded?”

Izuku shook his head, standing slowly to make sure he was stable on his feet. His head swam slightly, but it quickly passed. “I th-think I’m okay now,” he mumbled, feeling embarrassed for his earlier dizziness. He picked up the red duffle bag he remembered putting his underwear in and moved to the dark brown dresser.

Aizawa unzipped the other duffle, saying, “Alright. Sit down if you start feeling dizzy again. Recovery Girl will murder both of us if you fall over and give yourself another concussion.”

“Yes, sir,” Izuku replied seriously, knowing Recovery Girl’s ire only too well. He quickly unzipped the bag and unloaded his clothes into the dresser drawer.

The dark-haired hero paused to glance at his ward briefly before pulling out a stack of shirts and hanging them in the open closet. The

two worked quietly for several minutes, the only sounds the sliding of plastic hangers on the metal closet rail and the Voice Hero singing loudly from the kitchen.

Izuku let himself take in the domesticity of his current surroundings. The cat watched them work from her perch on the wooden desk, tan tail flicking slowly back and forth. He couldn't say why, but the easy silence between himself and Aizawa along with the carefree way Yamada was belting out songs on the radio put his frazzled nerves at ease. He was still uncomfortable and unsure about the whole situation, but the jittery feeling from the car lessened somewhat as he folded the last of his pants into the dresser drawers.

By the closet, he heard Aizawa snort at one of his t-shirts, the one that had 'JEANS' written across the front in big, blocky letters. Dark eyes glanced over at the teen, an eyebrow lifted questioningly. Izuku felt his freckled cheeks redden slightly. "M-my mom and I thought it was f-funny," he mumbled. Aizawa chuckled and shook his head at the next shirt on the pile, this one with 'WINTER COAT' written on it.

"Just don't mix up this and your *actual* winter coat, kid," the man smirked, sliding the shirt onto a hanger and placing it next to the previous. Izuku, glad his teacher seemed to be laughing at the joke shirts instead of questioning his sanity, finished stacking his socks and closed the dresser drawers. Moving to the last bag, he pulled out his All Might plushie, tucking it neatly into the corner by his pillow. The rest of the bag contained miscellaneous items like his toothbrush and bento box.

Aizawa flattened all the empty bags and boxes, dragging them out into the hallway. Izuku looked around the uncluttered room. He liked it, he could admit that to himself. He was particularly excited for the larger desk to spread his homework on. He didn't let himself get too attached though. *This is temporary*, he reminded himself. *Just until mom gets back. Just until then*.

Pulling his dark hair up into a messy bun, Aizawa stepped back into the room and glanced around, dark eyes landing on the bag by Izuku's feet. "What's left?" he grunted, bending to scratch at Tofu's ears as she sauntered out of the room.

"Um…" Izuku mumbled, green eyes looking down into the open bag, "J-just my bathroom stuff a-and my bento…" Aizawa nodded and motioned for the teen to follow him as he exited into the hallway, moving away from the front door and further into the house.

Stopping in front of the next doorway on the left, Aizawa opened it, revealing a very ordinary bathroom. The walls were painted a light blue, and the shower was covered by a simple gray curtain. Izuku wasn't really sure what he was expecting as he quickly set his toothbrush in a drawer and his shampoo on a ledge in the shower stall. *Aizawa's home is so…normal.* He probably should have realized Ashido's suggestion of a bat cave as their teacher's preferred sleeping place wasn't realistic.

Aizawa shut the door behind Izuku, grunting. "Make sure to shut the door when you're done. Tofu likes to drink the toilet water."

Empty of his bathroom necessities, the duffle bag hung limply from Izuku's arm. He set it down, pulling out his bento and chopsticks with one hand and a nervous smile at Aizawa. Aizawa tossed the empty bag onto the pile by the doorway and led him into the dining area. The kitchen sat off to his left, divided from the rest of the large, open room by a slim countertop that was currently covered in various sliced vegetables and a rice cooker. Yamada danced around the kitchen, belting lyrics, shirt sleeves rolled up to his elbow, and an apron declaring "Kiss the DJ" tied around his slim waist.

Aizawa took his bento gently, tucking it into a cupboard by what Izuku assumed was a small pantry. He then gestured at the low dining table, grumbling, "You can put your chopsticks on the table if you want, we'll eat in a few minutes." Aizawa watched the exuberant man tossing vegetables into a medium-sized wok for a moment while the teen hesitantly set his chopsticks down, then turned to the rest of the open room. "I'll show you where everything in the kitchen is when he's done making a mess."

"A delicious mess!" Yamada corrected over the booming radio, pointing his oily spatula at the dark-haired man.

Aizawa raised an eyebrow at his husband before speaking to Izuku again. Gesturing at the L-shaped couch and flat-screen TV, he said, "This is the living room. You can watch whatever you want on TV, just turn it off by nine o'clock." He pointed to the sliding glass door overlooking a small park with a multitude of trees, "Balcony and fire escape there." He pointed to another door on the wall across from the balcony, "That's mine and Hizashi's room." He paused momentarily as he thought, then continued. "If you need one of us, just knock."

Izuku nodded, green eyes scanning the stylishly decorated living space. He scratched at the skin of his hand under the edge of his cast

absentmindedly as he tried to catalog the space and keep track of the rules. *I can do no TV after nine. Mom always turned it off at eight anyway.*

Aizawa felt himself running out of things to say as they stood in the living room with nothing to do. Hizashi would be far better at the whole "Make Izuku feel welcome" thing. Sighing, Shouta glanced around for something, *anything,* to make the kid relax from his stiff posture. Not finding anything, he sighed heavily again, asking, "Any questions?"

Izuku shook his head, green eyes glancing around the room nervously. *Of course he doesn't,* Aizawa thought, glancing at the lip tightly clenched between the kid's teeth and the red skin where he was scratching at his cast. Knowing they needed to curb these habits earlier rather than later, Shouta reached over and placed his hand over Izuku's, noting that the skin was looking more raw than red.

"You're going to hurt yourself, Problem Child," he chided gently. Green eyes snapped to meet his, wide and filled with the anxiety Shouta became accustomed to in the hospital. Putting a hand around the short teen's shoulders, he led him to the dining table, thumb rubbing gently against his shoulder blade. Izuku momentarily tensed under the touch, then relaxed as they walked the short distance and kneeled on the cushions around the table.

Shouta pulled three bowls from the cupboard, placing them on the table and laying out the rest of the utensils. Hizashi followed after him with the rice cooker heavy in his arms. Shouta kneeled on his cushion, dishing rice into Izuku's bowl before filling his own and Hizashi's. The blond man returned with the stir fry vegetables and chicken, setting both on the table before sinking down with a satisfied sigh.

Shouta glanced at Izuku as he filled the teen's bowl with vegetables, noting his downturned eyes and carefully neutral expression. Hovering over the chicken, he asked, "Think you can keep this down?"

Stuttering, Izuku glanced up and replied, "Oh um…yes, sir." He returned his gaze to his lap, hand clenching and unclenching against his thigh. Shouta hummed quietly to himself at the use of 'sir' again, but continued filling everyone's bowls.

Hizashi happily said, "Itadakimesu!" Shouta and Izuku replied with the same, though with less fervor than the Voice Hero.

The trio dug into their bowls, Izuku struggling slightly to hold his with

his cast, but eventually finding a good grip on it with the limited movement of his hand. After several mouthfuls, Hizashi addressed Izuku. “How about we play twenty questions! You know what that is?”

Green curls bounced slightly as Izuku tilted his head, “The American g-game?”

“Yeah!” Hizashi exclaimed, tossing a snow pea into his mouth. “We can go back and forth. You ask either of us something, then we’ll ask you a question. Anything you don’t want to answer, you can pass on. Sounds like fun, right?”

Shouta glanced over his bowl at his excited husband, smirking into his rice. He had a feeling he knew what kinds of questions Izuku was going to ask, and he hoped Hizashi was prepared for the flood that was about to spill forth.

Izuku blinked slowly, a slight crease between his eyebrows as he thought it over. “C-can I ask about a-anything? Even your q-quirks?”

“Sure, kiddo! Though some things we’re not allowed to talk about per UA and Hero Commision rules, but we’ll just pass on those ones, alright?”

Excitement slowly overtaking anxiety on Izuku’s face, he nodded quickly, shoveling rice into his mouth as he searched for a question to ask. Finally settling on something, he swallowed, leaning forward as he asked, “S-so, um, m-most of the hero forums say there’s only c-certain frequencies y-you can use. Is that t-true or…or do you have a r-range of frequencies?”

Hizashi laughed good-naturedly, “Going straight for the hard questions! I dig it! Nah, I can go from high to low quicker than Midnight can put you to sleep! Full range of frequencies!”

“Wow!” The teen leaned forward. “D-do you ever hit the natural frequency of an object and sh-shatter it accidentally?” Izuku gazed at Hizashi with wide eyes, chopsticks pausing halfway to his mouth.

“That’s two questions,” Hizashi winked conspiratorially, then continued, “But the answer is yes! I’ve shattered more than a few statues and buildings accidentally.” He scratched his head with the thick end of his chopsticks, laughing in a self-depreciating manner.

Izuku shoved the next bite of rice and vegetables in his mouth as his

freckled cheeks flushed red and he mumbled, “Sorry.”

Hizashi waved his hand, “It’s all good, little listener.” Scooping more rice and vegetables into his bowl, he smiled at Izuku from across the table, eyes crinkling at the corners behind his glasses. A small smile twitched at the corners of Izuku’s mouth. The blond man tapped his chin as he thought, then his whole body lit up as he decided on a question. “Alright, kiddo. When did you decide you wanted to be a hero?”

Aizawa glanced at Izuku over his bowl, curious to hear the answer as well. While he spent a great deal of time in class making sure his students were prepared and had the potential to be heroes, he didn’t usually find out why or when they chose the profession until much later.

Izuku swallowed and wiped at his mouth, a small smile on his face. “Honestly, um, before I can even remember. I used to w-watch All Might’s d-debut video over and over when I-I was a k-kid, and I always wanted t-to be a hero like him. Even after the doctor—um after m-my mom t-told m-me…how d-dangerous it w-was.” He shoved more rice into his mouth, staring at the table top with anxiety swimming through his green eyes.

The two pro heroes glanced at each other, Shouta frowning at the increased stuttering and nervous ticks. Hizashi signed ‘*Doctor?’* at Shouta before exclaiming, “That’s awesome! I figured out I wanted to be a hero when I was about thirteen, so you knew *way* before I did.” Hizashi paused for a moment to see if Izuku would respond, but the teen remained quiet. Encouragement laced through his tone, the blond continued gently, “Your turn to ask a question, kiddo.”

Izuku set down his bowl, his stomach starting to clench uncomfortably. He couldn’t tell if it was the food or the near miss with revealing his quirklessness that was making his stomach turn, but thought it best to stop either way. Stuttering heavily, Izuku caught Aizawa’s dark gaze briefly before looking away. “Um…th-this one is f-for A-Aizawa-s-sensei…”

Shouta murmured gently, “Just Aizawa or Shouta outside of school, kid.” He added more rice to his bowl, eyeing the half-finished dinner in front of Izuku.

“S-sorry…” The teen mumbled, the constant flush that had been in his cheeks heating up and turning more red. His fingers twisted and

untwisted in his lap.

“No need to apologize. What’s your question?” Shouta continued eating, appearing outwardly unconcerned in an attempt to help Izuku relax. Some of the tenseness in the teen’s shoulders left, but overall the kid was one enormous ball of nerves and anxiety. He was fully prepared to help his Problem Child; he just hoped Izuku would be receptive to help. With how adamant the teen was about his mother coming back, Shouta was certain it would take time.

“I-Is there a l-limit t-to how many q-quirks you can e-erase at one time?” Izuku’s wide green eyes peeked up at Aizawa from under his lashes, nervously curious.

Shouta paused, chewing his vegetables as he tried to decide if that information was against his various non-disclosure agreements. Deciding it wasn’t, he replied, “Depends on how many people you can put in my line of sight.”

Izuku appeared to silently calculate just how many people that could be, then realized what Aizawa was saying. “S-so…there i-isn’t a limit?” He straightened as he addressed his teacher, eyes blown wide.

Aizawa could see his mind working a mile a minute with the new information and smirked tiredly. “The limit is how much dry-eye I want to deal with afterwards. Most of the time it’s not worth it to erase more than one quirk at a time.” He winced, remembering the last time he’d attempted to erase more than one quirk. He’d erased three villain’s quirks at the same time to prevent a kidnapping. While saving the victim was always worth it, he had to seriously reconsider how he used his quirk after an entire week with a head-splitting migraine.

Izuku immediately started muttering to himself. “If there’s no limit to how many quirks, then you could potentially erase an entire stadium filled with people at a time! That could be really useful for large groups of villains!”

Aizawa added wryly, “Sure, if I wanted to blind myself permanently. Quirks have limits, kid, even if they’re the limits of the person using them.”

“I-I suppose that makes s-sense. Kind of l-like how T-Todoroki can only use his right side for so long b-before he starts getting hypothermia.” Izuku’s hand unclenched from the fabric of his shorts as he felt himself becoming more comfortable. He reached for his

chopsticks again, his appetite slowly coming back.

Shouta nodded, glad the kid was beginning to relax into the conversation. “Exactly. Now,” he shot a look at Hizashi who was about to interrupt, “it’s my turn to ask a question. Favorite color. Go.”

The trio continued the game of twenty questions for well over an hour. Izuku continued to relax with each question, seemingly happy to chat quirks for as long as they would let him. The only time he asked a question not related to their hero work, he tentatively asked when they got married. Hizashi ran off to their room, exclaiming a quick, “Be right back!” before returning with their wedding photo album. Shouta quietly excused himself to start the dishes as his exuberant husband gushed over the photos of them at the altar.

“Shouta was so handsome! I keep telling him to wear a suit more often, but he says that it’s ‘not logical,’ whatever that means. It’s perfectly logical to look dashing, Shouta!” Hizashi pouted, shouting the last part loud enough for Shouta to hear over the running faucet. The dark-haired man simply raised an eyebrow and continued cleaning.

Hizashi dropped his voice to a loud whisper, which was still audible to Shouta even with the water running, “That man has no sense of fashion whatsoever, Izuku, I swear.” He winked conspiratorially at the teen who coughed into his hand to hide a smile and his laugh.

Shouta silently finished the dishes and put the leftovers into the fridge as he listened to Hizashi and Izuku chatting. The pair migrated onto the couch and Hizashi showed Izuku the JSL signs for the various items in their living room. Tofu hopped onto the couch cushion between them, rubbing her head against Izuku’s hands while he watched Hizashi signing carefully.

*It will be a lot of work*, Shouta thought to himself, *to set this whole situation to rights.* He shut off the faucet and dried his hands as he gazed at his husband, who was practically glowing with pride at Izuku. *But it will be worth it.*

Chapter End Notes

> We finally get to leave the hospital and get some more good Dadzawa and Dadmic! I've always thought that Izuku would have hero merch that wasn't All Might, so his radio and Eraserhead eraser are cannon in my eyes.

Hope you all enjoyed! Have a great week, and we'll see you on the weekend again. :D
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# Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku stared at the ceiling of Aizawa's guest room. He couldn't actually see it; the room was too dark, but he continued staring anyway. He'd been lying awake for several hours now, and his mind was resorting to conjuring images in the dark shadows of the room. He watched what looked like some sort of fox monster shake and disappear before sighing and sitting up. He fumbled his free hand over the side table and found the switch for the lamp. The light briefly blinded him and he shut his eyes quickly, wincing at the sudden change of brightness in the room.

When his eyes finished adjusting, he glanced around the room. The notebooks thrown haphazardly onto the shelves two days ago were rearranged in order, along with his various books. The few pieces of hero merch he still had were displayed proudly on their own shelf. By the closet, a pile of plastic bags held a sleeping bag, a large water bottle, and a multitude of new clothes for the summer camp. Izuku only needed the sleeping bag, but Yamada-san insisted on taking him through several clothing stores in the mall before they left today. *Well*, Izuku thought as he glanced at the dull red numbers on his alarm clock, *yesterday, technically.*

A dry cough itched at his throat, causing his eyes to water. Izuku tried to cough quietly, not wanting to disturb the rest of the house's occupants, but the itch refused to leave. He stood, quietly tiptoeing to the door with his All Might blanket wrapped around his shoulders and pressed his ear against it. Nothing. He cracked it open and slipped his skinny form through the small opening and into the hall. Creeping into the dining area, Izuku looked to the right at Aizawa's and Yamada's bedroom door. There was no light beneath the door, so Izuku continued into the dimly lit kitchen only to startle when he saw Aizawa leaned against the sink with Tofu in one hand and his phone in the other. The man's dark eyes flicked up to watch Izuku, but softened when the teen nearly jumped out of his skin.

"O-oh, s-sorry, Aizawa-s—" Izuku said quietly, holding himself back from adding sensei to his teacher's name only barely. "I-I didn't m-mean to…" He wasn't sure what he was going to say, but Aizawa seemed to understand anyway.

“It’s alright, kid,” the tired man replied, his voice a low grumble. He put his black phone down, eyes scanning over Izuku and lingering on the dark circles under his eyes. “Can’t sleep?”

Izuku shook his head slowly in response, then coughed as the itch in his throat returned. In discomfort and embarrassment about the blanket he was wrapped in, he asked, “Um…wh-where are the c-cups again?”

Aizawa pointed to a cupboard on Izuku’s left, shifting to the side so Izuku had access to the sink. The teen opened the cupboard gingerly; green eyes scanned the contents and selected the most plain of the glasses stacked there. He hurried to the sink, coughing lightly as the glass filled, then immediately drained it. The cool water soothed the itch immediately and he sighed with relief as he filled the glass again.

A quiet ‘ding’ sounded from a silver electric kettle on the countertop. Aizawa gently dropped Tofu onto the counter and poured hot water into a thick mug Izuku didn’t notice before. He held up the kettle, tired eyes looking questioningly at Izuku. “Tea?”

Izuku swallowed another gulp of water, wondering if he would be intruding on the man. Aizawa simply waited quietly with deep circles under his eyes for an answer. Nodding, Izuku mumbled, “Um…yes. Thank y-you.”

Aizawa hummed in acknowledgement, pulling another mug out of the cupboard and filling it. After dropping another tea bag into the water of Izuku’s mug, he asked, “Honey? Sugar?”

“H-honey, please.”

The two sat in silence for several minutes while the tea steeped. Aizawa leaned against the counter, watching the digital clock on the microwave with half-lidded eyes and bare arms crossed in front of his chest. Though Aizawa seemed to be perpetually tired, Izuku couldn’t think of a time when he’d actually shown it like this. His homeroom teacher was always ready to jump into action at school, even straight out of his yellow sleeping bag. Aizawa in his own home was clearly a different story.

Dark eyes closed momentarily as Aizawa took in a deep breath, then turned to remove the tea bags from both mugs. He slid the dark gray mug over to Izuku, picking up the cat mug for himself and taking a sip. Seeming satisfied with the tea, he sighed heavily and leaned his head back against the cupboards, eyes slipping closed again.

Izuku sipped his own mug, the heat from the mug warming his fingers and the chamomile tea soothing his nerves. He continued to pet Tofu with the fingers of his broken arm, enjoying the softness of her fur and the fact that she was letting him pet her for longer than a few seconds.

Aizawa rubbed his closed eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose before lifting his head from against the cupboard door. He gazed tiredly at Izuku, then spoke with a gravelly, sleep-deprived voice, “Still alright with talking to Tsukauchi tomorrow?”

Izuku sipped his tea, giving an affirmative, “Mhmm,” and staring down into his mug as he gently swirled the hot liquid. He tapped his toes against the cool tile. Tofu dropped down from her seat on the counter to sniff at his toes curiously, her whiskers tickling his feet and causing him to twitch his foot away.

“You can change your mind at any time if it makes you uncomfortable. Just let me know.”

Izuku just nodded, not sure what to say. His sleeplessness, though mostly stemming from discomfort with his new situation and all the anxiety that came with it, was exacerbated by the pending conversation with Detective Tsukauchi. When Aizawa asked during the drive to the mall if he was willing to speak with the detective, Izuku agreed, but he was still struggling to understand why he needed to speak to the detective at all.

His mother was on vacation and would be returning before school started up again. Sure, she left him alone, but that was something parents did all the time, right? It’s not like taking a vacation was a crime, so why was the detective involved? These thoughts were circling Izuku’s head for hours, preventing his already frazzled mind from settling down enough to sleep.

Green eyes continued staring down into his mug in-between sips as Tofu decided his feet were the perfect place to lay down. She started purring softly not long after flopping over his cold toes. His lips twitched up into a smile as he wiggled the toes of one foot under her and she made the equivalent of a cat snore before returning to perpetual purring.

Aizawa groaned low in his chest and winced, his mug dropping onto the counter with a soft ‘clink.’ He reached deep into the pocket of his sweatpants and pulled out a bottle of eye drops. With ease born of repetition, he quickly applied several drops to both eyes, blinking

several times to clear the excess liquid with his head tipped back. He waited several seconds for the medicated liquid to take effect before bringing his head back down and rubbing at the scar under his right eye.

Izuku watched this all curiously, though he tried to be surreptitious in his staring. Aizawa used eye drops frequently during class, especially during hero training at the end of the day. Izuku wasn't sure if it was from Aizawa-sensei's quirk directly or because he kept his eyes open the whole time. He was itching to ask. He was too nervous to actually do it though, despite the 'ice breaker' rounds of 20 questions Yamada-sensei started at dinner each night. The greenette sipped at his tea, glad for something to fidget with as he restrained himself from prying.

Aizawa glanced at the microwave clock. 02:41 AM. Dark eyes turned to Izuku. "Think you can sleep, kid?"

Izuku started to answer 'yes,' but stopped himself. He was wide awake, his mind far too busy for anything akin to rest, and he didn't want to lie over something so trivial. Aizawa seemed to understand, grunting, "I can't either." He paused for a moment to drink the rest of his tea before gesturing to the couch. "Go find something to watch on the TV. I'll make more tea."

Izuku looked over at the TV, then back at Aizawa. The man was faced away from Izuku as he filled the kettle again. Izuku cleared his throat slightly, mumbling quietly, "W-won't the noise wake up Y-Yamada-sensei? I-I mean…um…Yamada?"

Aizawa shook his head, settling the kettle on its stand and clicking the button to start heating it up. "He sleeps without his hearing aids in. He won't hear it."

Izuku let out a soft, "Okay…" before bending to gently push Tofu off his feet. The tired cat meowed unhappily at him before standing and stretching. She sauntered towards the living room, hopping onto the corner of the L-shaped couch and settling into a tight ball on the squishy cushion.

Aizawa held his hand out for Izuku's empty mug. The teen quietly muttered his thanks, handed his teacher his mug, and slowly walked toward the TV. He perched in the bend of the 'L', but leaned forward to avoid displacing Tofu, his blanket making a tent shape around him. The cat watched Izuku with half-lidded eyes that reflected strangely in the dimly lit living room. Feeling slightly awkward, Izuku held the

remote up over the shadow of the couch to see where the power, volume, and channel buttons were in the dim kitchen light. Finding the right ones, he powered on the TV and immediately dropped the volume of the Hero News Channel.

“WELCOME BA-ck from the break. We have new coverage of a large-scale villain attack in New York this morning…”

Izuku opened the channel menu, flipping through the multitude of late-night news channels and comedy shows that his mother didn’t approve of. He couldn’t find anything that he thought Aizawa would like, so he kept scrolling through the channel listing until his teacher came around the couch and offered the gray mug to Izuku. The man set his own mug on the coffee table and pulled a couple blankets from the pile by the sliding glass door.

Izuku fiddled with the remote, scrolling very slowly through the channel options and trying to gauge if Aizawa was interested in any of them as the man unfolded a large quilt from the pile and draped it over his legs. Aizawa stretched his feet out to rest on the coffee table. Izuku scrolled for what seemed like an eternity before Aizawa pointed to the screen. “Have you seen those old Marvel movies?”

“N-no. Wh-what are they?” Izuku searched the screen, trying to find which show Aizawa was pointing at.

“They’re American hero movies from before quirks. They’re not bad.” Aizawa sipped his tea, shifting his legs on the table. “Click on that one. Ironman.”

Izuku found the right channel and selected it, glancing at Aizawa from the corner of his eye. The tired hero was far more relaxed than Izuku had ever seen him, arm tossed over the back of the couch and half-sunk into the squishy cushions. Izuku bit his lip, unable to shake the feeling he had since his teachers had taken him home to pack his things: that he shouldn’t be privy to their personal lives and was just a nuisance to them.

He buried those feelings as he wrapped the fluffy All Might blanket tighter around him, leaning back into the couch carefully to avoid disturbing Tofu from her perch. *Mom will be home soon, and then Aizawa- and Yamada-sensei won’t have to deal with me anymore. Everything will go back to normal.*

The pair watched the movie quietly for several minutes, Izuku jumping slightly at the explosions when Stark’s convoy was attacked.

When it started showing a montage of Stark creating the metal suit, Izuku piped up, his curiosity too much to keep down. “I-is Stark a s-support hero, then?”

Aizawa considered the question for a moment before answering, “I suppose he would be.”

“And q-quirkless?”

“Mhmm,” Aizawa glanced over at Izuku’s blanket tent, a soft upward tick to his lips that could be considered a smile. “Before quirks, remember?”

“B-but he doesn’t have s-super powers either? I t-though all the old heroes had p-powers.” Izuku watched as Stark used his support suit to burst out of the cave he was imprisoned in and fly into the desert.

“Just his support gear,” Aizawa replied, turning back to the TV and finishing off his tea. Izuku sank deeper into the couch as he relaxed, suddenly much more invested in the movie.

They continued watching for the better part of an hour, Izuku occasionally commenting on how cool Ironman’s suit was or asking a question about the realisticness of the setting. The movie was just about to reach the reveal of Stain’s own Ironman suit when Aizawa noticed that Izuku had gone quiet. Looking over, he saw the teen leaned up against the back of the couch with his head at an odd angle and fast asleep. Aizawa smiled, reaching for the remote where it sat between himself and the lightly snoring teen.

TV turned off and mugs gently set in the sink, Aizawa gently rested a hand on Izuku’s shoulder and called his name. “Izuku…”

Izuku scrunched his nose as he came to, jolting slightly as green eyes stared around to get his bearings.

“Come on up. Your bed is more comfortable than the couch.”

Izuku slid his bare feet onto the ground as he slowly sat up, rubbing the sleep from his eyes and following Aizawa silently back down the hallway to his room, feet shuffling quietly over the wooden floorboards. Shouta huffed a laugh as Izuku fell face-first onto his bed, practically invisible among the folds of the large red and white blanket. “Goodnight, Problem Child.”

Shouta was just about to shut the door when a muffled and quiet,

“Goodnight…” wormed its way out of the pile of blankets. He shut the door softly, hoping the kid would be able to sleep at least a little bit tonight.

—

Shouta sat between Izuku and Detective Tsukauchi at the kitchen table with a cup of coffee steaming in front of him as Tsukauchi pulled out a pen and notebook. The detective arrived just a few minutes prior, welcomed in by Hizashi with a loud, “Tsukauchi! It’s been too long, my man!” He was ushered into the dining area, where Izuku watched him curiously from over the couch. The teen had tentatively asked Aizawa if they could finish Ironman after breakfast, and was petting Tofu on the dark blue sofa.

Now, the three sat around Shouta and Hizashi’s kitchen table while the Voice Hero made some quick finger foods. Tsukauchi flipped a few pages in his notebook before speaking to Izuku. “I have a few questions about your mom and what’s been going on for the last month or so, if that’s alright, Midoriya-kun?”

“Um…sure…” Izuku replied quietly, scratching the skin of his hand beneath his cast. Aizawa watched the nervous habit carefully, ready to intervene if it looked like the anxious teen was about to break skin.

“If you don’t want to answer any of the questions, you don’t have to. This is just an interview.” Tsukauchi clicked his pen and smiled invitingly. “I do have to inform you that I have a quirk that tells me if a person is lying or not. I don’t want to make you uncomfortable, but I can’t turn it off. Still okay to keep going?”

Izuku looked interested at the description of the detective’s quirk. “Y-yes, that’s fine. D-Does your quirk work on n-non-verbal responses too?”

Tsukauchi smiled, his brown eyes twinkling slightly at Izuku’s question. “It doesn’t, only verbal answers.”

“O-Oh…” Izuku bit his lip, switching from scratching to clenching his fist on his thigh.

Tsukauchi seemed to find the correct page in his notebook, and gazed up at Izuku with a relaxed posture. Aizawa knew from working with the man for so many years that he was choosing his body language carefully to make Izuku feel at ease. He appreciated the gesture.

“Alright, when did you realize your mom wasn’t at home?”

“A-after my internship with G-gran Torino.”

Tsukauchi noted that down, seeming to understand when that had taken place. “Did you know she was leaving?”

Izuku thought for a moment before answering, “Um…she…mom was talking a-about going on a v-vacation w-with a friend while I was on m-my internship…”

Shouta locked eyes with Hizashi, who paused in his preparations. The two held each other’s gaze for several moments, an understanding that this conversation could turn awkward very fast passing through them.

Tsukauchi leaned back slightly, “Do you know which friend? Someone you know?”

Izuku gazed off to the side, remembering the conversation between him and his mom. *She was definitely talking to dad. Why wouldn’t she say so? I’d want to visit him too, but I guess if during my internship was the only time she could go…but she’s been gone for long enough I could have come, too.*

“Midoriya-kun?” Tsukauchi encouraged, face open and welcoming.

Izuku took a deep breath, letting it out slowly. “I…M-mom was talking to someone on…on the phone. It sounded l-like my dad.”

The detective scribbled something in his notebook, “And your dad doesn’t live with you and your mom, correct?”

The teen shook his head, curls bouncing slightly. “He lives in S-san Francisco. In America.”

All three adults in the room had different expressions on their faces, and two were glad Izuku was not looking at them right at that moment. Tsukauchi held a look of dawning comprehension, while Shouta and Hizashi were furious and horrified respectively.

Shouta grit his teeth, his anger simmering right up at the top of his boiling point. *She and her husband decided to abandon Izuku together? Good god.*

Keeping his composure, Tsukauchi continued, “You said your mom was talking about a vacation. Did she say when she was planning on

coming back?"

Izuku nodded and started to scratch his hand again at the tension he felt rising in the room. He felt his heartbeat quicken and a jittery energy coursing through his body as he glanced at Aizawa's murderous expression from the corner of his eye.

Tsukauchi asked Izuku to elaborate. The teen cleared his throat nervously, "Sh-she said b-before the next s-semester started?"

"When did your mom tell you that? Before she left?"

"N-no…" Izuku stuttered, his mind jumping immediately to the note still tucked in a side pocket of his backpack. *'…maybe we can come visit before your next semester!'*

"So after she left, then?"

Shouta could see the teen beside him growing more agitated as the questions continued. The teen's left hand was beginning to turn a rather alarming shade of red, so Shouta gently placed his hand over Izuku's, muttering quietly, "Don't hurt yourself, kid."

Izuku flushed in embarrassment, quickly shoving his right hand into the pocket of his shorts. "S-she left a n-note…" Izuku mumbled quietly. Green eyes stared down at the wood grain of the table, tracing the gently curving lines from where Aizawa was sitting on his left to the end closest to the kitchen on his right.

Tsukauchi hummed as he wrote something down in his notebook. "Did she say anything else in her note? That she was leaving you money or how to contact her in an emergency?"

Izuku stared down at his lap, his cast-encased arm swinging gently against his chest in the sling. He bit his lip before answering, long buried feelings from when he'd come home to find his mom gone resurfacing with the questions. Swallowing around a lump in his throat, he muttered, "J-just that r-rent was paid until next s-semester." *'…and you're a smart boy, I'm sure someone will offer you a job with your new quirk!'*

Tsukauchi shared a look with Aizawa before asking tentatively, "Do you still have the note?"

Izuku felt tears gathering in his eyes and blinked rapidly to keep them at bay as he pointedly kept his eyes downcast. He shook his head, not

trusting himself to speak and knowing the detective's quirk would catch him in the lie anyway if he did. His fist clenched against his thigh, knuckles turning white with the tightness of his grip.

Tsukachi slid his notebook and pen into a pocket of his tan coat, giving Aizawa a tight-lipped smile. "Well, Midoriya-kun, I think that's all the questions I had. I'll let you all get back to your morning." Aizawa rose to escort him out, squeezing Izuku's shoulder as he did. Izuku sniffled and wiped his hand across his freckled cheeks.

Tsukauchi and Aizawa held a hushed conversation in the hall as the detective slipped on his shoes.

"I haven't been able to reach Midoriya Inko, but if she's with her husband then maybe I can try that angle."

Shouta sighed, glancing back at the table where Izuku still stared down into his lap quietly. Hizashi watched the teen from the kitchen with worry written all over his face. "I assume you've opened a child abandonment case?"

Tsukauchi tossed his coat over his shoulder and straightened. "I started that as soon as you told me what Midoriya-kun said in the hospital. I hope you're in for the long haul on this one, Eraser. He's never going to live with either of his parents again, most likely."

Aizawa pinned the detective with a dull glare, feeling that point was mostly obvious.

A quiet cough sounded from the other end of the hall as Aizawa opened the door for Tsukauchi. Both men turned to see Izuku standing with his free hand shoved deep into his pocket and his cast pressed tight against his chest. His shoulders were slumped forward and tense as he tentatively looked up at the detective with red-rimmed eyes.

"Um…D-Detective Tsukauchi?"

The tall man smiled at the teen, "Yes?"

Izuku shuffled his slipper-clad feet anxiously, green eyes flicking between Aizawa and Tsukauchi. He cleared his throat, "Is…is my mom in t-trouble?"

Tsukauchi opened his mouth to answer, then stopped and let out a breath, trying to decide what to say. There was no real way to be delicate about Midoriya Inko's situation. If she ever returned to Japan,

there'd be police waiting for her at the airport to book her at the Musutafu Precinct.

Anxiety rising at the lack of response, Izuku continued, "It's j-just, she-she didn't do anything w-wrong. Sh-she's just on v-vacation, and she's c-coming back." His earnest face gazed at the two of them hopefully, eyes glinting with unshed tears as he practically begged them to say everything would go back to normal. That everything would be fine.

Tsukauchi locked eyes with Aizawa before speaking gently, "Even if she's just taking a vacation, leaving you alone without food or money to pay for things is still wrong. I'm sorry, Midoriya-kun."

Izuku stared down at his slippers, silently mulling over the detective's words. Finally, he bowed slightly, mumbling a quiet, "Thank you," before slipping into his bedroom and shutting the door with a soft click.

Tsukauchi looked to Aizawa with a grimace. "I'm sorry, Aizawa. I feel I just made things worse."

Shouta shook his head, grunting, "This would have happened eventually, Tsukauchi. Don't worry about it."

Tsukauchi nodded, setting his tan hat on his head and walking out into the hallway of the apartment building. "I'll let you know if I find out anything from the father. I'll see you, Eraserhead." He waved at Hizashi before striding towards the elevator.

Shouta shut the door and locked it. He returned to the kitchen and sat at the table, sighing.

Hizashi chopped several vegetables, adding them to the tray of finger foods he made for lunch. "Should we go talk to him?" His yellow-green eyes sparkled with worry behind his square-frame glasses, a deep frown between his eyebrows.

Shouta ran a hand through his loose hair, pondering the situation. He didn't want to leave Izuku stewing for too long, but the kid clearly needed some time to think. Having one's whole world flipped upside-down wasn't something one got through easily.

"Give him a few minutes," Aizawa sighed, sipping at his warm coffee and scratching Tofu's ears as she passed by. Her tail twitched, curling around his arm briefly before sliding off as she went to drink at her water bowl. Hizashi finished putting the lunch plate together and

stored the unused ingredients back into the fridge. His long fingers tapped rapidly against the countertop as the two waited in silence.

After about ten minutes, just as Shouta was about to go knock on Izuku's door, the teen tentatively stepped out. His eyes and cheeks were red, but he didn't seem to be on the verge of crying anymore. Wiping a hand across his nose as he sniffled, the green-haired teen padded towards the dinner table.

Hizashi smiled brightly at Izuku, calling out, "Hey, kiddo! Still want to finish that movie?" He held up the lunch tray. "We can eat on the couch if you want."

Izuku bit his lip to keep it from trembling as he held himself together with what felt like nothing more than scotch tape. Voice wobbly, he replied, "S-Sure…"

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Later that night, long after Shouta returned from his patrol, he woke to find Hizashi not in bed next to him. He glanced at the clock, seeing 03:12 AM blinking at him in red. A soft frown creased his brow as he glanced around, seeing the door to the living room slightly ajar. He rolled quietly out of the large bed, and stepped out into the rest of the dark home.

It didn't take him long to find where Hizashi went. Out on the balcony, Shouta spotted the outline of his husband, complete with bedhead, next to Izuku, who didn't appear as if he laid down at all. The sliding glass door was slightly open, allowing Shouta to hear what the two were saying as they looked out on the city under a bright moon.

"…My parents died when I was about ten. Bounced between several foster homes after that until I graduated."

"D-did you move a l-lot?"

"Oh yeah, I usually was in a new house every semester." Hizashi laughed slightly, "I couldn't control my quirk back then, and none of my foster parents wanted to put up with the constant noise."

"B-but that's wrong! Isn't it?"

"Definitely not rockin', kiddo. You're right. But that's just how it was." Hizashi shrugged, glancing down at Izuku as they sat.

Izuku gripped the metal railing as he thought. He didn't say anything for quite awhile, but Hizashi seemed perfectly happy to let him think. Shouta leaned against the wall of the living room, watching the two as Tofu twirled around his legs.

"A-am I going to m-move a lot t-too until my mom comes back? Aizawa-sensei said I-I wasn't in f-foster care, but…"

Shouta could see the hand Hizashi had resting behind Izuku twitching to pull the teen into a hug. The blond hero leaned closer to Izuku, a warm tone to his voice. "Not if you don't want to, green bean. We're happy to have you as long as you want to be here, ya dig?"

Izuku sniffed heavily, wiping his eyes with the back of his hand. His shoulders shook as Shouta started to hear soft crying. "R-really? I-I don't want to get i-in your way…" He asked.

"Oh kiddo, one-hundred percent. That room's yours forever as far as I'm concerned."

Izuku immediately began hiccupping as tears streamed down his freckled cheeks. Hizashi watched with a helpless expression, desperately wanting to comfort the kid but not knowing if it would be welcome. Finally, he couldn't take it anymore and asked, "Do you want a hug?"

The teen looked up with glistening eyes before nodding quickly and launching himself at Hizashi. The hero was knocked back slightly with the force of the hug, but quickly wrapped his arms around the small teenager sobbing in his arms. Shouta locked eyes with Hizashi over Izuku's shaking shoulders. His husband sent a sad smile his way before pulling Izuku closer, his green hair tucked under Hizashi's chin.

It took several minutes for Izuku to calm down enough to disengage from Hizashi, and when he did, he looked away in embarrassment, a flush high in his cheeks as he meekly apologized.

Hizashi, leaving an arm around him, immediately replied, "No apologies needed, little listener." They sat in companionable silence for a beat while Izuku wiped his eyes dry before the blond continued, "Besides, hugs are my favorite thing. If you ever want one, you just come on over." He gently shook Izuku with the arm around his shoulders in a teasing manner.

The boy let out a soft laugh, a small smile to his voice as he quietly admitted, "I like hugs, too."

Hizashi squeezed the small shoulder under his hand, pulling Izuku closer. Shouta waited for several moments, then turned to head back to bed as the two on the balcony sat quietly watching the park below.

Chapter End Notes

Hello dear readers! It's been a few weeks since the last chapter. Life started getting in the way of my hobbies, but here we are!

Thanks to everyone who comments and leaves kudos, I really do appreciate the support and thoughts on the story. It keeps me motivated to write more and make this story as good as it can be. You peeps are awesome. <3 <3 <3

Enjoy the chapter, and we'll hopefully see you next week again. :D

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Shouta sighed as he gazed at the nearly empty refrigerator. Hizashi was called in at the last minute to the radio station to cover for one of the other hosts, so it was up to the dark haired man to provide dinner for himself and Izuku. Shouta glanced over the kitchen counter at the mop of green hair that barely peeked over the top of the couch. Normally in this situation he would down a couple jelly packs and be done with it, but Izuku needed more than jelly packs for dinner and certainly shouldn't follow Shouta's unhealthy lifestyle.

Sighing again, he shut the fridge. His long, black-clad legs took him over to the back of the couch, where he leaned over the cushion and scratched at Tofu's ears. Izuku looked up at him from his corner of the couch, green eyes tearing away from Captain America: The Winter Soldier. After finishing Ironman, Hizashi decided a Marvel marathon was in order, and they spent the last several days working through the MCU lineup. Shouta wasn't sure it was such a good idea, especially after seeing how often Izuku jumped out of his skin at the explosions, but the teen seemed interested in them.

"Pause it for a moment," Shouta grunted. Izuku did so, eyes returning to Shouta's face when it was done. Though the kid was more comfortable with both himself and Hizashi, there was still an undercurrent of anxiety behind his green irises. Shouta didn't think it had anything to do with *them* necessarily, more likely due to his mother's actions and the feelings that came with it, so he didn't worry overly much. He was also aware Izuku was naturally a nervous person from observing him during the first semester of class.

"So, here's the situation," he started blandly, looking over to meet Izuku's gaze. The kid waited patiently, a finger tapping against his knee. That was another tick of Izuku's Shouta had picked up on; clenching his fist or scratching was an anxious response, tapping was a curious one. He continued, "Hizashi usually cooks, and for good reason. Since he's not here and there are no leftovers, we're left with two options."

Shouta went to explain the two options, but Izuku quickly blurted, "Do y-you need me to cook?"

The hero paused, not expecting an offer from the teen. He looked sideways at his Problem Child, who looked completely ready to head into the kitchen, even pulling his All Might blanket off his skinny legs and scooting to the edge of the couch.

“No, kid. I was going to say we’re going out.”

Izuku paused mid movement as he stood, then lowered himself back onto the couch. He looked back at Shouta, an earnest, nervous look on his face. “A-Are you sure? I can cook.”

The dark-haired man shook his head, standing straight and walking towards the front door. “I’m not making you cook with a broken arm. There’s nothing to cook with anyway.” He picked his small keyring up off of the kitchen counter as he passed into the hallway. Izuku stood, hurrying after him with what Shouta thought might be excitement. It certainly wasn’t the anxious way he would tip-toe around the first few days he was here.

They both slipped their shoes on, Izuku sitting down to tie the laces of his red boots. Shouta unlocked the door as the teen stood. “Got your key?” He questioned as he watched Izuku grab his hoodie from the coat rack. The nights were chilly still, even if the days were quite warm. The short boy patted the pockets of his navy blue shorts, smiling when he found the right one and pulled out the All Might keychain with a single house key attached. Shouta nodded in approval as he swung the door open, letting Izuku through first and following behind. If nothing else, he would instill good habits in the kid while he was here.

The odd pair walked down the hall to the elevator, one dressed entirely in black, loose clothing and looking for all the world like he was born tired, and the other in bright summer clothes trying, with great difficulty, to hide the grin on his excited face.

Izuku pressed the button for the ground floor, then stood against the back of the elevator next to Shouta, the fingers of his right hand tapping rapidly against his leg. Shouta waited for the teen to speak first. It only took until the elevator opened on the ground floor.

“Um…Aizawa?” Izuku was better about not adding honorifics to the end of his name, but still hadn’t gotten comfortable enough to use his given name. *Though*, Shouta thought with humor, *he got close with Hizashi this morning*. He really didn’t mind that Izuku was taking to Hizashi faster than himself. The man was a walking billboard for

making people comfortable. Especially shy, nervous types, he thought ryely, trying to shake the thought of himself in high school.

Shouta hummed in response, “Hmm?” They walked out of the apartment complex and into the park area, moving toward the busy street Hizashi and Izuku were watching from the balcony several nights before.

“Y-you said there was t-two options? Wh-what’s the other one?”

Shouta slowed as they reached the entrance to the street, merging with the heavy foot traffic and moving with the crowd of people. “We were going out regardless, there’s nothing in the fridge,” he grunted, putting a hand on Izuku’s slim shoulder to make sure he didn’t get lost in the busy street. It took nearly ten minutes, but finally they pushed through into a less crowded section of street. Shouta sighed, stopping and facing two shops. “Your options are: Sushi,” he pointed to the sushi bar on the right, then gestured at the small shop on the left. “Or ramen.”

Izuku looked between the two shops, weighing his choices. Shouta could practically see the gears churning in the kid’s head. “Um… ramen?” He looked up questioningly at Aizawa, uncertainty heavy in his expression. He fidgeted with the edge of his shorts.

“Good choice,” Shouta responded. While he knew the sushi bar had options without raw fish, it would have limited Izuku’s roll options immensely. He didn’t need the kid vomiting the night before summer camp because he got bored of the same two rolls. There was only one vomiting incident since the hospital, and Shouta intended to keep it that way.

The pro hero led the way into the busy shop, the little bell above the door ringing happily as they passed under it. Izuku followed closely behind Shouta, head swiveling as he gazed wide-eyed around the store.

From behind a counter, a rotund, balding man with a long goatee called out to them. “Aizawa!” He boomed, holding up a large hand in greeting. Shouta nodded at the man, spotting two seats at the counter and shepherding the awestruck teen towards the stools.

“Taneki. Business is going well?” Shouta pulled a paper menu out of the caddy carrying various sauces and placed it in front of Izuku, already knowing what he wanted. Izuku took the menu gingerly, looking up at Aizawa nervously as he bit his lip, then turning back to

scan the page.

“It’s booming!” The large man chortled, chopping several green onions and tossing them into a large vat of broth. He wiped his hands with a rag on the side of his cooking area, then turned to face the pair. “Oh, who’s this? You didn’t tell me you had a kid, Aizawa!” He grinned widely at Izuku, looking back and forth between Shouta and the green-haired teen. Izuku looked up, shock written across his face as he turned to see Shouta’s unimpressed expression.

“Did you inhale chili powder this morning? Of course I don’t.” Shouta grunted, rolling his eyes at the hearty, gut-shaking laugh from Taneki. Gesturing to his ward, he said, “This is Midoriya Izuku. He’s one of my students.”

Izuku gave a small bow from his chair, “It’s a p-pleasure to m-meet you, sir!”

“So polite!” Taneki chortled, dishing out bowls to several of the other patrons. Pulling out a pen and notepad, he leaned on the wooden counter, scratching a few things out before looking up expectantly. “So, what’ll it be?”

Shouta rattled off his usual order while Taneki nodded and scratched on his pad. Then he turned to Izuku, “And for you, young man?”

The teen visibly gulped, biting his lip as he looked down at the menu. Shouta eyed Izuku’s clenched fist under the counter and leaned over to point at the top of the menu. “Which meat? I would suggest either no meat or chicken.”

“Um…chicken, please.”

Shouta moved to the next section, prompting Izuku to choose his vegetables, then how spicy he wanted his ramen. Once they’d gone through the entire selection process, Taneki nodded encouragingly. “Drinks?”

“Beer for me,” Shouta replied immediately. He looked at Izuku, who looked unsure.

“C-can I have…um…a c-coke?” He stuttered, glancing between Aizawa and Taneki as both men nodded approvingly.

“I’ll get right on it. Sit tight, you two.” The large man shuffled into the back of the shop, returning with an open beer bottle and a can of

Coca-cola. He set the cool drinks down in front of them and started chopping vegetables for their meal.

Shouta silently sipped at his beer, feeling Izuku's eyes glancing at him frequently. Taking a guess at the kid's odd behavior, the man grunted, "Never been to a restaurant like this before, kid?"

Izuku swallowed a gulp of coke and looked around, taking in the atmosphere. "N-no. My m-mom always c-cooks."

Shouta frowned, noting the use of present tense while he rotated the cold glass bottle. "Every night?"

Izuku nodded, then amended, "W-well, sometimes she bought l-lunch for herself and g-gave me the leftovers. She didn't like eating leftovers very m-much, so I got whatever s-she didn't want. A-and I had to cook a lot too, b-because she was w-working."

Shouta took a large sip of his beer at that, his mind immediately thinking that Midoriya Inko's outlook on leftovers applied to more than just food. Wondering just how far back the mistreatment went, Shouta asked, "Did you have to cook for yourself often?"

Izuku swirled his soda with the plastic straw, watching the brown liquid as it reflected the overhead lights. "Pretty much e-every day since s-she had to switch to n-night shift." His tone was far away, his eyes intent on the coke in his glass.

Curious, and trying to keep Izuku talking now that he was opening up, Shouta replied in a light tone. "When was that?" He hoped it was a recent change, but the more he learned about Izuku the more he got the feeling nothing about Midoriya Inko leaving was a surprise.

Izuku's feet swung in the empty space between the stool he sat on and the floor, his legs just a bit too short to comfortably rest against the cross supports below the seat. "Um, just after I started m-middle school?" He mumbled it so quietly that Shouta almost didn't hear, but he did. His heart clenched. That would've been almost two years ago. His anger against the woman who called herself a mother grew, simmering low in his gut.

Trying to keep his voice even and not let any of his ire escape into his tone, the pro hero commented, "Well, if you ever wanted to show Hizashi some new recipes, I'm sure he'd appreciate it."

Taneki placed their bowls in front of each of them. "There you are

Aizawa, and you young man. Enjoy!”

Shouta passed Izuku a pair of chopsticks, grabbing some for himself and breaking them quickly. The teen thanked him, then turned to mix the vegetables floating on top of the broth in with the noodles. While they ate, Shouta continued asking gently prying questions, hoping to get even a little bit of information on Izuku’s homelife. Between exclaiming about the deliciousness of his ramen, Izuku painted an unhappy picture, though his tone betrayed the fact that he didn’t believe any of it was out of the ordinary. “M-mom works twelve hour shifts usually, so I d-don’t see her much until the weekends. A-and she tries to see Auntie M-Mitsuki a l-lot too. B-but mom would leave me l-leftovers, like I said. And I c-can cook for myself just fine. I d-don’t need much. D-Did you know you can make a-at least ten different meals f-from just rice and stir fry v-vegetables? I-it’s all in the seasoning and h-how you cook the veggies…”

And so it went, Shouta making a longer and longer list of reasons why he needed to get Izuku in with a counselor and have Midoriya Inko locked up forever. By the end of dinner, or at least when Shouta finished his bowl, Izuku was only able to eat a third of his portion. All the talking seemed to tire him out, which didn’t surprise the pro hero in the slightest. Izuku was very quiet for most of the week thus far, choosing to sit in silence until either Shouta or Hizashi struck up a conversation. Izuku probably said more tonight than he did the entire rest of the week combined.

Shouta pulled out several bills and left them on top of the receipt as Taneki helped Izuku pour his remaining ramen into a to-go container. The teen thanked the balding man profusely, earning a deep laugh from the cook. “Have a good night, both of ya’. Always good to see you, Aizawa.”

“Good night, Taneki.”

“Thank you, Taneki-san!”

The pair walked home quietly, Izuku full and tired, Shouta mulling over the things he learned over dinner. When Hizashi got home he resolved to have a discussion with him about what the best course of action was. In the meantime, however, he simply smiled as the skinny teenager rubbed at his eyes, shuffling off to his room with a quiet, “Thank you for dinner.”

“You’re welcome. I hope you liked it.” Shouta replied, hanging his

jacket on the hook in the dim hallway as Tofu meowed at his feet.

Izuku paused at the door to his room, eyes slightly glassy. He nodded several times, then sniffed. “I liked it a lot.” He went to shut his door fully, then mumbled, “Good night.”

“Good night, kid.”

Izuku’s door shut fully, followed by the sound of a teenager slumping onto his mattress. Shouta shook his head, smiling as he picked up the cat and stored the leftover ramen in the fridge. He stared at the plastic container sitting on the white racks, alone except for scraps of vegetables shoved into one of the drawers, a half-empty tin of cat food, and a jug of orange juice. Shouta imagined Izuku sitting alone in that empty apartment in a similar manner. Like Midoriya Inko’s leftovers. Kept one day, then thrown out the next when he wasn’t wanted anymore. The thought caused Shouta’s rage to grow until his breathing was unsteady, his jaw clenched tight, and his grip on Tofu tightening.

Shouta vowed, then and there, standing in front of a nearly empty refrigerator. Izuku would never be tossed out like unwanted food again. He would have a place here, with him and Hizashi. Always.

—

Shouta leaned against the front door to his and Hizashi’s apartment, watching Izuku carefully search through his bags and check off items on his list of summer camp necessities.

“Sleeping bag…check! Water bottle…check! Hiking boots…wearing them. Check!”

Though he’d only been with them a week, Shouta was already starting to see vast improvements in Izuku’s overall physical health. He could see it in the way the kid held himself and moved, crouching frequently to riffle through his bag and dashing into his room for missed items. It was almost imperceptible, but both Hizashi and Shouta swore the baby fat that used to cling to the kid’s freckled cheeks was starting to come back now that he was eating three square meals a day, courtesy of the blond DJ. Lord knew Shouta couldn’t cook to save his life.

Shouta continued his train of thought as the teen ran back and forth between the hallway and his room. Izuku’s physical health was improving greatly, but his mental health had a long way to go. The boy was one giant ball of anxious fretting, and every new revelation

about his life with his mother seemed to bring his progress back multiple steps.

Hizashi tiptoed gingerly over the pile of duffle bags to stand next to him by the door, both observing the chaos in the hallway. “Ready for two weeks with only Vlad King for company?” Hizashi smirked, green eyes filled with humor as he glanced up at Shouta, who gave him an unimpressed stare.

“Am I ever?”

Hizashi laughed, leaning up against Shouta’s side. “I’m sure you’ll survive! After all, you’ll have forty teens all living in a small, cramped area to keep you company.” Shouta rolled his eyes and sidestepped, causing Hizashi to lose his balance and flail his arms to keep himself upright. Shouta smirked while Hizashi gave him a teasing glare from behind his red, square-framed glasses.

Izuku stepped out into the hall with several pairs of socks tucked into his sling. He crouched next to one of his bags, unzipping it and shoving the socks into the overly stuffed bag as best he could one-handed. Hizashi stepped over to help him zip it back up, seeing the teen struggling with just one hand. “Got everything, kiddo?”

Izuku stood once the zipper was fully seated again, looking over the two bags he was bringing with him. “I-I think so…” He pulled the list out of his pocket again, scanning over it with his bottom lip firmly between his teeth. Once he got to the bottom of the list, he nodded, muttering, “That’s e-everything on the list…”

“Sunglasses?” Hizashi reminded him.

Izuku paused momentarily before darting back into his room to search for the sunglasses Hizashi bought for him at the mall earlier that week.

Shouta waited until the teen was out of sight and could be heard rummaging in his room before snatching Hizashi’s hand and pulling him in for a deep kiss. The blond let out a yelp as he almost tripped over Shouta’s own bags, before melting into the embrace.

Izuku paused in his search as he heard his English teacher’s exclamation and then sudden silence. Peeking his head into the hallway, he immediately felt his face flush red at the scene and hurriedly retreated into the room, heart racing. While he was perfectly aware his two teachers were married, the amount of times Izuku saw

them showing affection was very few. He always felt like an intruder on their lives whenever it happened, causing his gut to clench uncomfortably. *Just a nuisance, an unwanted, useless distraction.* He hardly remembered if his own parents were outwardly affectionate with each other, and his mom had never been unfaithful to his dad in all the time they were apart. The only other couple Izuku really interacted with was Kaachan's parents, and their brand of affection was…odd to say the least.

Izuku rummaged through the desk, fairly certain he put his sunglasses there, while his mind ran a mile a minute. *I'm sure they didn't want me to see that, so don't mention it at all. Pretend like you saw nothing. Don't intrude on their personal business.* He found the sunglasses fairly quickly, but continued to open and shut drawers, giving his freckled cheeks time to return to normal color after flaring cherry red. Loudly, he called, "I-I f-found them!" He tentatively stepped out into the hallway, looking down at the mess of bags on the floor. He carefully slid the glasses case into his backpack, the only bag that still had room, and stood. His fingers clenched the fabric of his school uniform as he turned to glance nervously up at his two teachers.

Aizawa and Yamada stood apart, Aizawa with his hands shoved deep into the pockets of his hero uniform, Yamada running a surreptitious hand through his now loose hair. Both had a slight flush to their faces, which Izuku quickly looked away from as the feeling of being an unwelcome outsider flared in his chest. He bit his lip harshly, tasting blood.

Hizashi cleared his throat, "Alright! Let's get rolling, then!" The green-haired teen nodded, looking down at his bags and deciding he couldn't carry all of them at once. Izuku carefully maneuvered the strap of his backpack around his cast, then stooped to pick up the grocery bag filled with healthy snacks. His teachers insisted he take what felt like half the pantry with him, and while Izuku understood that he needed to eat per Recovery Girl's orders, he felt guilty at the amount of food the pair purchased just for him. He knew from living on his own that the kinds of snacks in the bag were significantly more expensive than others. He subconsciously added up how much it must have cost and grimaced.

The drive to UA was fairly short compared to Izuku's usual train ride to the school. Hizashi tried to keep a conversation going, but Izuku felt too strained to reply with more than a few words at a time. The drive ended quickly, the blond pulling into an entrance Izuku hadn't even realized was there and parking in a small lot not far from the

main building.

The trio quickly loaded up their bags and headed to the front entrance, where a large bus waited for them. Izuku looked around, knowing the rest of their classmates weren't due for another half-hour, but hoping one of his friends might show up early. He didn't see anyone other than the bus driver, who was too invested in his phone to notice anyone.

"Alright, green bean! I expect to see a ton of pics, you dig?" Hizashi's hands waved energetically as he shouted, his excitement getting the better of him.

"O-okay," Izuku mumbled, messing with the tie that the blond spent at least ten minutes this morning fussing with. It still looked wrinkled, despite his best effort.

Hizashi beamed, then glanced around before pulling both Aizawa and Izuku into one big hug. "Be safe, yo! And have a rockin' time at summer camp, kiddo!" Izuku's eyes widened as he was squished into Aizawa, not having been this close to the man since his multiple breakdowns in the hospital. It wasn't as strange as he thought it would be.

The Voice Hero released them both, kissing Aizawa on the cheek briefly and ruffling Izuku's hair. "I gotta run, but I'll see you both in a couple weeks!" He waved, smiling brightly as he walked back towards the small parking lot.

Izuku waved back, feeling a weight settle in his stomach as the man strode away. He thought returning to the normalcy of a school trip would help reduce his anxiety, but watching Hizashi leaving was having the opposite effect. He felt himself hyperventilate, the skin of his left hand turning red from scratching and the taste of blood flooding his mouth. His toes tingled and his leg muscles twitched as he stared with wide green eyes at the retreating back of one of his guardians.

He was being left alone again, he was sure. The loose hair on the blond's back looked just like his mother's style. She was walking away. Not even looking back to make sure he was alright. His chest felt like he was being crushed. He couldn't breathe, couldn't call out. But he had to. Had to tell her something. But, his mom wasn't blond, was she? Unable to stop himself, Izuku took off running after the man, calling, "Hizashi! W-wait!"

Surprise lit up Hizashi's eyes behind his red-framed glasses as he looked around, turning just in time to catch Izuku as he crashed into him, thin arms squeezing around his middle with an astounding amount of force for a kid who was recovering from malnutrition. Hizashi was able to keep his balance, but only barely, as Izuku hugged him within an inch of his life. "Don't go." His voice was barely audible.

"Hey, hey, kiddo!" He wheezed, a little winded from the impact. He wrapped his arms around the teen, squeezing tightly back. He felt Izuku's thin shoulders shaking and tucked the mop of green curls under his chin. Muttering comforting words as his green bean shuddered with sudden tears. He spied Shouta moving towards them as he gently rubbed circles over Izuku's boney back, squeezing the teen tightly into his chest. "It's alright, Izuku. It's just a couple weeks, then you'll be right back home watching Marvel movies with us and snuggling with Tofu, ya dig?"

Izuku nodded against the soft fabric of Hizashi's gray button-up, still shaking and crying. The blond felt a damp spot forming on his shirt, but paid it no mind. Shouta stopped not far from the pair, a frown creasing his otherwise passive face. Hizashi knew him long enough to see when the man was concerned, and right now worry was shining through his dark eyes.

Patting Izuku's curls, Hizashi continued his gentle shushing and upbeat words as the teen's sobs reduced to hiccups and uneven breaths over the course of several minutes. When his shoulders stopped shaking, Izuku pulled away, looking down at his red boots and wiping his eyes. He eyed the dark spot on Hizashi's shirt where his tears soaked in and mumbled quietly, "S-sorry…"

Hizashi squeezed Izuku's thin shoulder, saying, "No worries here, kiddo! Just a shirt, and I got plenty." He smiled brightly, catching Izuku's eye and making sure the teen was going to be okay. "Hey, you go have a ton of fun at summer camp, you hear? And when you get back, we'll make a huge bowl of popcorn and have a movie night. Sound like a plan?"

Izuku sniffed, wiping his nose and nodding with a small, sad smile. "C-Can we watch I-Ironman again? I l-like that one."

"Of course!" Hizashi led Izuku with the arm around his shoulders to where Shouta was standing, stopping when the dark-haired man was within arms-length. "I'll see you both in a couple weeks. Don't let

Shouta get into too much trouble, ya dig?”

Izuku sniffed heavily, a small laugh pulled unwillingly out of him at the ridiculousness of *him* keeping a pro hero out of trouble. He felt the anxiety slowly seeping away as he stood in front of one of his favorite people in the world. He nodded, his smile brightening as he and Shouta turned away from the exuberant blond and walked back toward the bus. Shouta settled his hand on Izuku’s back as they walked, and he leaned into the contact.

Hizashi yelled after them, “Izuku!” The teen turned around. Hizashi signed for him. *I’ll see you soon, green bean!* With some difficulty due to his cast, Izuku returned the sentiment. *See you soon, loud bird.*

“Shouta you did NOT teach him that!”

The dark haired man smirked, signing *Love you, loud bird.* Hizashi shook his head, scoffing dramatically as he signed back *I love you, catnip* and walked back to his car, feeling a warmth blooming deep in his chest.

Chapter End Notes

Gotta admit, writing tired Izuku and tired Aizawa made me tired.

Happy weekend! Hope everyone's St. Patty's day was good and your weekend is better. :D

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku stood silently while he and Aizawa waited for the rest of his class to join them. He kept glancing in the direction Hizashi had left in, feeling slightly embarrassed at his outburst, but also still feeling that undercurrent of anxiety at seeing the blond man walk away. He was very glad for Aizawa's strong hand resting on his shoulder. It grounded him and kept the panic from growing. Izuku shuffled his feet and sniffed as he wiped at the wetness on his cheeks. He gazed in the direction of the teachers' parking lot again, his hand clenched against the pants of his school uniform.

Aizawa looked him over, dark eyes lingering on the clenched fist by his Problem Child's side. He squeezed the hand on Izuku's shoulder, drawing the kid in closer. Green eyes flicked up to meet his dark ones questioningly, then nervously dropped down to the ground around his red boots. Shouta leaned down to mutter quietly to Izuku, "Hizashi will be here to pick us up when we get back."

Izuku bit his lip, shoulders slumping as he leaned into Aizawa, the physical comfort helping to keep his anxiety at bay. "I-I know…" He didn't sound convincing even to himself.

Shouta maneuvered so he was in front of Izuku, leaning down to gently pry his clenched fist apart. He glanced up when Izuku's trembling fingers loosened, a warmth behind his normally severe, dark eyes. He reached up and tapped Izuku's chin, "Don't bite your lip so hard, Problem Child."

The green-haired teen flushed slightly, looking sheepish. He released his bottom lip from the grip of his teeth, the skin turning very red when the blood started to flow back in. "S-sorry…"

"You don't have to apologize," Aizawa assured him. "I just don't want you hurting yourself."

Izuku nodded, his head dipping down as he watched his boots scuff against the asphalt. Aizawa moved his hand back up to the kid's thin shoulder as he spoke, rubbing gently, "Do you know what you're going to tell your friends when they get here?" Izuku shook his head,

eyes glued to a small patch of scratches on his boot where Tofu got a little rambunctious. He felt a pit forming in his stomach at the thought of explaining the situation to Uraraka and Iida.

Aizawa squeezed his shoulder, glancing around to make sure none of his other students were around. When he saw no rambunctious teens making their way to the bus, he continued, “You don’t have to say anything if you don’t want to, but I suspect Uraraka and Iida will have questions about your arm. Most of the class saw it break during your exam.”

Izuku felt his hand clench again as he imagined the conversation that was sure to happen. Uraraka was a good friend, but she was often more intuitive than Izuku wanted to deal with right now. She’d see right through him for sure.

Mumbling, Izuku asked, “W-what should I t-tell them?” He didn’t know what he should do. He desperately wanted everything to return to normal, like his mother was still at home waiting for him to return from his school trip. The thought of admitting to anyone that he wasn’t a good enough reason for his mother to stick around was painful and filled him with shame. He viciously squashed the errant thoughts down, his ever present mantra running through his head. *She’s coming back she’s coming back she’s coming back! She’s a good mom!*

Shouta looked down at the short, shaking teen as Izuku’s breaths became uneven. Recognizing the signs of another panic attack, he immediately brought his Problem Child in close, his strong arms holding him tightly and muttering quietly to him, “It’s alright, kid. You don’t have to tell them anything. It’s okay.”

Izuku gasped as he felt his chest clenching tightly. He was so tired of the endless crying and anxiety. His shoulders shook heavily as the force of his emotions rolled over him. *Why am I like this? Why can’t I be normal like everyone else!*

“You *are* normal, kid. You’ve been through something no one should have to deal with. I’d be concerned if you *weren’t* like this.” Aizawa reassured him, rubbing his hand in circles on Izuku’s thin back as the teen broke down. He guessed the green-haired boy didn’t mean to speak aloud judging by the lack of stutter, but he was glad Izuku did. It gave Shouta much needed insight into what the teen was thinking, something his Problem Child hadn’t voiced since leaving the hospital.

Izuku flushed in embarrassment and hid his face in the front of Aizawa's hero uniform. He wished he was anywhere else, but also couldn't bring himself to step out of the tight hug. His teacher's arms, heavily muscled despite the man's hobo-esque appearance, were the only things keeping him from falling to pieces in that moment.

Izuku felt Aizawa's chin rest on top of his head, the gruff man muttering comfortingly, "It's alright. I'm here for you." The steady stream of assurances continued for several minutes while Izuku calmed down. Eventually, the green-haired teen felt a wave of exhaustion wash over him as his shoulders slumped and he leaned against his homeroom teacher, too tired to feel embarrassed about it.

Aizawa squeezed his shoulders again before pulling back slightly to pull a handkerchief out of a deep pocket. He handed the square cloth to Izuku, ruffling the kid's hair when bloodshot green eyes glanced up at him questioningly. "Your class is arriving. You can sit on the bus while they load their things if you need a minute."

Izuku looked towards the front gate where he could see several of his classmates talking animatedly to each other as they walked toward the bus. He sniffed, thanking Aizawa for the handkerchief and wiping the tears from his cheeks. He pulled away from the dark-haired man, moving to board the bus before the rest of his class arrived. The pro hero followed him to the door, pausing as Izuku was about to step up into the vehicle.

"Izuku," he called quietly. The teen turned to glance at him, a deep sadness still lingering in his green eyes. Aizawa's face softened as he continued, "If you start feeling like that again at any point during camp, I want you to come talk to me. I may not be an expert on hugs like Hizashi, but I can hold my own."

Izuku searched Aizawa's face in surprise for several long seconds before a small smile twitched at his lips. Nervously, he stuttered, "Y-you give pretty good h-hugs, Aizawa-sensei."

Aizawa patted Izuku's back and winked at the short teen as he moved into view of the rest of Class 1-A. "It's an essential skill for pro heroes, kid. Don't forget that." Izuku's smile grew larger as he couldn't contain the soft giggle that escaped him. Aizawa inwardly smirked, glad he was able to raise the teen's spirits at least a little. "Go find the best seat on the bus, Problem Child."

Izuku quickly boarded the large vehicle, picking a spot where he could

easily watch his classmates arriving from the window. Aizawa stood near the front of the bus looking like his usual bored self, directing Class 1-A where to store their bags. Izuku watched as Iida tried to get everyone in perfect order to board the bus, then saw Iida's spirit fail him as he realized the seat layout was more open than he'd planned.

"My perfectly organized boarding strategy was foiled by the open layout, but I'll ensure our exit strategy is at peak efficiency!"

Izuku smiled up at him, patting the seat next to his own as Uraraka sat across the walking aisle.

"Deku! How are you doing? Is your arm okay?" Her earnest brown eyes gazed over the blue cast on his left arm with concern.

"Indeed! Midoriya, are you quite sure you should be attending this camp with such an injury?" Iida gazed sternly through his square glasses at him, but Izuku recognized the worry in his voice.

Izuku's breathing stuttered as Uraraka called out his hero name, but he pushed through it. Waving his right hand in an appeasing manner, Izuku said, "R-Recovery Girl cleared me to join the c-camp, so no worries there!"

Uraraka reached out and tapped the hard cast after Kaminari strode past them to the back of the bus. "Did she not heal you all the way? Is your arm still broken?"

"S-she um…" Izuku searched around for something to say, then decided to just state the truth. Or, most of it. "I-it was a pretty bad b-break, so R-Recovery Girl couldn't heal m-me all the way. I d-didn't have enough energy, I-I guess…"

Iida nodded in understanding while Uraraka let out a soft, "Oh…that makes sense. But at least you're okay, right?" She looked up at Izuku's green eyes, frowning slightly at the redness she found there.

Izuku nodded, smiling at his friends. "Yeah, I-I'm all good." *Physically, at least* , he thought. His inner turmoil wasn't something he necessarily wanted to talk about when the entire rest of their class was around to hear it.

Bakugo passed the trio, red eyes glaring at Izuku and narrowing when he saw the expression on the meak teen. The explosive blond strode past them without comment, which Izuku was infinitely glad for.

Once everyone was settled, Aizawa and the bus driver closed the storage compartment on the outside of the bus and climbed aboard. Aizawa-sensei's dark eyes roamed over the heads of each student. Izuku noticed the man's right hand signing numbers as he performed his headcount. Upon reaching 20, Aizawa called over the general chatter of Class 1-A. "Quiet."

When the chatter didn't subside, Iida stood and yelled loud enough to be heard through the bus. "Sensei called for quiet!" The noise decreased to slight giggles and whispers from the back.

Aizawa gazed over the class, making sure everyone was paying attention. "The location of this camp has been changed. We'll be stopping at one-hour intervals for restroom breaks until we arrive."

Excited muttering broke out at this, each wondering where they were going. The noise increased past where Aizawa could be heard over it. Shrugging and sitting down, Izuku heard the man mutter, "Go ahead and fool around now, you won't have time for it once we get there." Izuku remembered what he saw of Kaminari's training plan at the hospital and felt a shiver run down his spine. His class was in for a week of hell training, that he was sure of. He just wasn't sure what Aizawa was going to have *him* do since he was specifically told not to train.

A voice from the back shouted and pulled him from his thoughts, "Hey, Midoriya!"

Izuku looked back to see Kirishima waving at him. "Y-yeah?" He replied, eyes wide.

"How long do you have your cast for? Can I sign it?"

Izuku looked down at the blue wrapping, unsure what the red-head meant. "S-sign it?" He questioned, head tilting slightly in confusion.

"Yeah! Ashido has some sharpies. So, can I?" Dark red eyes, almost an amber color, sparkled with excitement as Kirishima called across the bus.

Izuku shrugged, struggling to understand why Kirishima wanted to sign *his* cast, of all people. He could only remember the popular kids in middle school getting their casts signed. Even if he broke a bone back then, no one would ask to sign the quirkless kid's cast. He certainly wasn't popular now, either, but Kirishima must have his reasons. "S-sure, if you want to…" He said nervously.

“Oh! Me too, Deku!” Uraraka called, rummaging in her own bag for a marker. Others also joined in, and soon Izuku was holding his arm out for just about everyone in the class as they decorated his cast with well wishes, signatures, and pictures. Bakugo was the only one who didn’t come to the front of the bus, though Todoroki hesitated for a long while before writing ‘Get well soon’ near Izuku’s elbow.

While everyone signed his arm, Kaminari asked, “So how did you break your arm anyway? I thought you figured out how to use your quirk without breaking yourself during the internships?” Several of his classmates looked to Izuku with curiosity evident in their expression, Uraraka and Iida foremost among them.

Izuku laughed nervously, catching sight of Aizawa’s dark eyes watching him from his seat next to the driver. Hand scrunching the pants of his uniform, he answered, “I-I think I just p-panicked when I-I was a-about to h-hit the building. M-must’ve just put t-too much p-power into m-my arm…heh…” He gazed back at Kaminari earnestly, hoping the electric blond wouldn’t pry further. He nearly sighed in relief when the teen answered.

“Oh, that makes sense. It looked really painful, though! I heard you had to get surgery and everything?” Kaminari, Ashido, and Sero all winced as they remembered the scene of Aizawa wrapping Midoriya’s noodle-y arm with his capture scarf and both of them landing heavily on the ground of the training arena.

Izuku nodded, looking down at his boots. “Y-yeah, I had s-surgery,” he mumbled.

Kirishima piped in, “Did it leave a scar or anything?” Kaminari and Mineta eyed the part of Izuku’s arm currently covered by his uniform sleeve.

The green-haired teen flattened the left sleeve of his shirt down in the wake of the prying eyes. He silently nodded, his thoughts returning to earlier in the week when Hizashi caught him frowning at the scar in the bathroom mirror one morning.

*“Hey, kiddo! Everything alright?” The blond peeked his head through the open bathroom door, his square glasses gleaming in the lights above the sink and a small bit of flour on his cheek from cooking.*

*Izuku hastily pushed his shirt sleeve back down, covering the thick scar that ran down the length of his arm and under the blue cast. He stuttered, surprised at the sudden appearance, “Y-yeah, everything’s f-fine!”*

*Hizashi frowned as he looked at the teen, then his expression softened. "Don't like the scar?" He questioned, an understanding smile on his face. Izuku rubbed his broken arm slowly as he shook his head, a sheepish expression on his freckled face. Hizashi winked, saying, "No worries! I think we have some scar cream around here somewhere. Follow me!"*

*The blond man headed towards the living room, and Izuku tentatively followed. Aizawa glanced up at them as he silently set the table for lunch, then continued with his work. Tofu's tail twitched as Izuku reached out to pet her on the couch. Hizashi opened his and Aizawa's bedroom door, telling Izuku to wait in the hallway while he entered. He left the door open as he did, leaving Izuku to gaze curiously in after him.*

*The room was entirely typical, which Izuku was both shocked and entirely not surprised by. Today marked day five of living with Aizawa- and Yamada-sensei, and while he had plenty of time to realize that the two pro heroes were just people like everyone else, seeing further proof of that fact still gave him pause. He idolized heroes to such a point he never stopped to realize that they had to eat, or sleep, or go shopping. Those things seemed so mundane when compared to pro hero work.*

*Hizashi riffled through what Izuku assumed was his bedside table. At the very least, it had three pairs of glasses (his regular square frames, his Present Mic shades, and a pair of sunglasses), a pile of hair pins and elastic bands, a small bottle of cologne, and an open box of Pocky. The other side table featured a lamp, a tiny plastic bottle that resembled Aizawa-sensei's eye drops, and nothing else.*

*Not finding what he was looking for, the blond moved to a large wooden dresser against the wall with the window. A mess of shirts and pants sat in a pile next to the dresser and a laundry basket. The clothes appeared to be all Hizashi's after Izuku spied the variety of color and style present among them. The teen studiously ignored looking at the clothes piled up in the laundry basket, though it was difficult not to notice the bright pink boxers with heart print over them that sat right on top.*

*The Voice Hero scratched his head after searching through the drawers, then walked into the connected bathroom. Izuku heard him muttering, "Where the hell did I put that stuff?" Several loud bangs echoed out from the bathroom as cabinets were opened and closed. Izuku saw Aizawa glance up at the sounds and roll his eyes as he moved to stand next to the teen. The two looked into the bedroom silently, Izuku nervously glancing up at the taller hero and wondering if he ought to be seeing the inside of their room. Aizawa didn't seem to mind though as he continued to stand next to the doorway and listen to Hizashi cursing from the bathroom.*

*The dark-haired man leaned down to Izuku to mutter, "What's he looking for?" His black eyes slid over the mess of items that spilled from Hizashi's side table and the dresser.*

*Izuku stuttered in reply, "S-scar cream?" Aizawa quirked an eyebrow, then sighed and walked into the room to the less cluttered side table. He crouched down and rummaged in the bottom drawer for a moment before standing with a small tube in his hand. He called to the bathroom, "'Zashi, it's right here. Let's eat lunch."*

*Hizashi's blond head poked out of the bathroom. "Huh? Oh, rockin'! You found it!" The two pro heroes exited the bedroom, Aizawa handing the tube of paste to Izuku before striding to the table and sitting down. Hizashi shut the door behind him, smiling happily at Izuku. "I'll show you how to use it after lunch, kay? It'll make the scar go away, or at least make it smaller. You should see what it did to the scar on Shouta's elbow from the USJ!"*

Izuku was brought back from his reverie with a grunted, "Sit down," from Aizawa-sensei. Izuku glanced up, seeing the dark eyes directed behind himself. Turning to face the back, the green-headed teen saw Kaminari, Mineta, and Kirishima moving up the aisle, eyes trained on his broken arm. The three paused at the threatening tone in their homeroom teacher's voice, all glancing at Izuku, who tucked his arm closer to his body and looked away. He didn't want to outright tell his classmates 'no,' feeling that would be rude, but the scar wasn't something he felt comfortable showing off. To him, it was proof of his own weakness, his inability to follow directions, and his own incompetence at taking care of himself, not a cool souvenir of the final exam. *You're useless, remember? Can't even use the quirk someone gave you.*

The three boys scrambled back to their seats and looked apologetically at Izuku before turning to talk to Ashido and Asui. Izuku glanced at Aizawa and their eyes met briefly. The man nodded at him before leaning his head back and returning to his nap.

The rest of the ride to the first checkpoint went smoothly. Izuku, Uraraka, and Iida chatted mostly about the exams and how everyone did while skirting the issue of Izuku's own exam and subsequent hospital visit. After an hour of driving, the bus pulled to a stop and Aizawa allowed Iida to direct everyone off the bus.

The class spilled out onto a dirt outcropping next to the road that overlooked a heavily forested area. Several of them exclaimed in

excitement, wondering where the camp would be if this was just the first stop. Most took the opportunity to stretch their legs and walk around for a minute. Izuku followed Uraraka and Iida to look over the edge of the outcropping at the forest below, marveling at the scene.

“Wow! It’s so pretty here!” Uraraka exclaimed, holding a hand up to her eyes to shield them from the bright sun as she looked over the large sea of green leaves.

“Indeed! Quite refreshing after so long training at UA’s city scapes! I, for one, truly look forward to this new environment.” Iida chopped a hand down into the other to emphasize his point as he smiled into the sun.

Izuku, excited for the camp, just nodded and enjoyed the scenery. After a few minutes of milling around, Izuku glanced at Aizawa to gauge how much time they had left and nearly choked when he saw two women and a young child standing next to him. The two women he easily recognized as members of the Wild Wild Pussycats, Pixie-Bob and Mandalay. The kid looked to be around six years old and wore a grumpy expression beneath his spiked hat.

“Woah! The Wild Wild Pussycats!” Izuku exclaimed in excitement, calling the rest of the class’ attention to their guests. He rushed forward to be closer and see their costumes in greater detail.

“You are correct!” Pixie-Bob called out, a large smile over her bright face. Her sky blue uniform contrasted greatly against the verdant forest surrounding them. Both women, one in blue and one in red, struck a pose, calling out, “We’re…the Wild Wild Pussycats! Welcome to our Beast Forest!” The kid next to them glared at the class and the pro heroes, unimpressed.

The entire class looked confused at their declaration. Behind him, Izuku heard Yaoyarozu mutter to Jiro, “I thought we weren’t at the camp yet?” Izuku turned to glance at Aizawa, who stood not far from him. The man caught his eye and a small smirk slid across his tired face. The teen immediately realized that Aizawa had employed yet another ‘logical ruse’ and the camp was in full swing as of this moment.

Pixie-Bob yelled louder to the group of gathered students, many of whom realized that Class 1-B was nowhere to be seen, nor were any bathrooms like they were told. “Listen up! Your camp is at the base of the mountain. Using your quirks however you see fit, your job is to

get to the camp before noon! Anyone who doesn't get there in time doesn't get lunch, got it?"

Mandalay turned to Aizawa, asking, "Ready?"

"I'll leave them in your capable hands," he replied, his signature scary grin creeping across his face. Pixie-Bob let out a 'whoop!' as she lifted her hands and the ground below Class 1-A's feet began trembling. Izuku watched as his classmates closest to the edge slid down the mountain to the forest below, followed by the rest of them as a large circular area of earth crumbled beneath them.

A strong jerk on the back of his shirt caused him to trip backwards out of the line of the earthslide and up against Aizawa's chest. The man helped steady him, then motioned for Izuku to follow him back to the bus. Izuku paused momentarily as he spied his classmates fighting some large, brown monster below before stumbling after his teacher. He spied the young child giving him a strange look as Pixie-Bob fixed the earthen outcropping.

"A-Aizawa-sensei? W-why did you p-pull me back?" He followed the man back onto the bus, the driver laughing heartily at the yells coming from below them. Aizawa sat down in his previous spot and motioned for the driver to get them moving again.

The man's dark eyes pierced into Izuku as he sat down, fidgeting anxiously with his backpack. "Is your arm still broken, Problem Child?"

Izuku looked down at the now thoroughly decorated cast, his shoulders slumping slightly. He nodded as he looked back at the man across from him. "Y-yes, sir."

"Then you have your answer. No training." Aizawa's expression softened at Izuku's disappointed expression. "You knew that before we came."

The teen scuffed his boot against the floor of the bus, biting his lip. He mumbled, "I'm a-already so behind…I'll h-have a lot of c-catching up to do."

Aizawa snorted, shaking his head. "Kid, with how fast you've improved your quirk, I don't think you'll have any issues keeping up."

Izuku looked down to his boots, his voice quiet. "M-maybe, but if e-everyone is training like in y-your training plans, and I c-can't even

use m-mine…" He knew he was behind. He was behind everyone from the very beginning simply because they all had their quirks from the start and he didn't. And now, unable to even use One for All without shattering bones, he was even further behind his class. *It's hopeless. How can I ever catch up? It took me ten months to get strong enough for All Might's quirk, and the last month has completely undone all that work!*

"Just because you can't train your quirk doesn't mean you can't train something else."

Izuku looked up, confused. Aizawa hadn't mentioned what Izuku would be doing during the camp since Recovery Girl had banned him from training, quirk-related or otherwise. Whatever Aizawa had in mind, this was the first time he was mentioning it.

The teen stuttered, 'B-but…Recovery Girl said…no training…?"

Aizawa leaned back in his seat, eyes gazing comfortably at Izuku and arms crossed over his chest. His booted feet, crossed at the ankle, stuck out into the aisle now that there weren't twenty students running up and down it. Cooly, he replied, "No *physical* training. That's an important distinction. And I agree with her; we need to get your weight back up before we start your training again."

Izuku felt a wave of embarrassment at the casual way Aizawa mentioned his weight, like it was just some small thing to overcome before everything went back to normal. *I ruined all the training All Might gave me in barely a month! I can't possibly meet his expectations now.* Shaking the thoughts from his mind and trying to figure out the puzzle laid before him, the teen asked, "S-so what kind of t-training am I-I going to d-do? If I c-can't do s-strength training or q-quirk training because of m-my w-weight, then that leaves c-cardio, or endurance…but no, those are physical t-training types. I suppose I could practice a-activating One for A-All without using it, b-but that would probably still break my b-bones, so that's out. R-really all that's left is…"

"Analytics," Shouta completed for him, a small smile twitching his lips as he watched his Problem Child reverting to another mutter storm. He hadn't seen one for nearly the entire time Izuku was staying with himself and Hizashi and was glad the change of scenery was breaking him out of his shell again. At Izuku's confused expression, he continued, "I know you have a good mind for quirk analysis. Your notebooks are very good."

At this Izuku flushed red under his freckled cheeks, his eyes looking anywhere but at Aizawa as he mumbled, “Just a hobby…”

“Then it’s a hobby you’re good at, and one that’s very important for a hero-in-training to work on.” Shouta sat up straight again, digging through one of the pockets on his uniform for a folded sheet of paper. Checking it was the right one, he grunted and held the paper out to Izuku, who took it gingerly and began to read. “This is your training for the camp. I expect at least three pages on every one of your classmates with that information,” he pointed at the paper, “included. I’ve got a blank notebook for you in my bag.”

Izuku nodded as he scanned through the list of items on Aizawa’s paper.

- *Description of each student’s quirk and how it works. Include information from the student themselves and your own thoughts.*
- Analysis on how each quirk could be used best for offense and defense. Also include uses in limelight heroics, underground heroics, and support work.
- Recommendations for support gear, including reasoning on what each item would do for the student.
- Determine best and worst matchups against the student from the following list of pro heroes and include reasons why.
- Endeavor
- Fat Gum
- Mirko
- Best Jeanist
- Kamui Woods

“Aizawa-sensei?” Izuku asked without looking up from the paper, his mind already running through all his answers for each of his classmates. He flashed back to Vol. 14 of Hero Analysis for the Future, which held a lot of his thoughts on the students of Class 1-A.

“Yes, Problem Child,” the pro hero replied, settling back into a relaxed posture. He gazed at Izuku with half-lidded eyes, looking like he was ready to take another nap.

“I might need two notebooks,” Izuku admitted, glancing up at his guardian and feeling confident for the first time in several weeks.

Aizawa smirked, leaning his head back and letting his eyes fall shut. “Can do, kid,” he mumbled as the bus bumped its way downhill towards a small cabin set in a clearing. “Can do.”

Chapter End Notes

Happy weekend! Hope you're all having a great week and are ready for some fluffy Dadmic and Dadzawa.

Hizashi is such a great dad. I love him. Izuku is still torn on what he wants, but maybe he's already subconsciously made a decision? We'll see! On the next episode: Izuku goes to camp! Or something, I dunno, I don't make anime outros.

On another note, I've seen a few other fanfics around that have their own discord servers, and I was invited to a large server dedicated to fanfic writers and readers. I was wondering, is there any interest in having a server for this fic or future stories I write? This fanfic is coming to a close, but I have so many ideas floating about, I know I'll be writing for a long while. What do you think? Let me know if you'd be interested down in the comments.

We'll see you again next week! As always, thank you so much for the comments and kudos. You're all great. :D

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku watched with anticipation as the bus trundled to a stop next to a large cabin and surrounding clearing. His legs jumped up and down as he tapped his fingers rapidly on the empty seat next to him. The bus driver pulled a lever to open the door and turned off the vehicle. The door cranking open woke Aizawa, who took the extra thirty minute ride to the camp as a good opportunity to nap. Izuku didn't mind at all. After an entire semester as the man's student and a week living in his home made the teen  well aware of how little Aizawa actually slept. He deserved any chance to catch some shut eye he could find.

Watching the dark-haired man for his lead, Izuku followed him off the bus and over to the storage compartment. The bus driver, a man in his late thirties with black hair and eyes that shifted color slowly, had already unloaded several large bags onto the ground beside the cabin. Aizawa started helping him, both men grunting when they encountered an unusually heavy bag. Izuku noted the heaviest appeared to be Aoyama's, which was decked out in bright colors and sparkling gemstones along the seams.

Aizawa glanced at Izuku as he ducked in to grab his own bag, muttering, "Did you eat something while I was asleep?" He pulled a pink duffle with several patches sewn on from the bus and heaved it onto the growing pile.

Izuku nodded, saying, "I had a granola bar."

"Good," Aizawa replied, helping the bus driver finish his task and close the storage compartment. They both wished the driver a safe ride back to town and watched as the bus drove away. Once the trundling vehicle was out of sight down the dirt road, Aizawa glanced down at the time on his phone and grunted, "We'll make lunch in about an hour. I don't really expect your class to get here until dinner."

Izuku looked up at the man, surprised. "R-really? I didn't think the camp was so f-far away."

Aizawa smirked, “It’s about eight miles of rugged terrain from where we left them, and Pixie-Bob is going to make it hell for them to make progress. If they make it in the next six hours, I’ll be impressed.” He watched the road as another bus bounced its way along the dirt road carrying Vlad King and Class 1-B’s luggage.

As the Blood Hero stepped off the bus, the bulky man threw a smirk and a shout to Aizawa, “Eraser! I saw some of your students on the way down, they appear to be having quite a lot of difficulties!” The broad man crowed, chest puffed as he hefted three bags from the bus at once. Izuku grabbed one of the smaller ones, knowing Aizawa would fix him with a glare if he tried anything too heavy with his arm, and listened to the two teachers as they conversed.

“Difficulty now is increased potential later, Vlad,” Aizawa said coolly in a monotone, seeming bored of the constant rivalry Vlad King pushed for between Class 1-A and 1-B.

“Or it’s proof that my class will outperform yours during the contest at the end of the camp!”

Izuku’s ears perked up at this new tidbit of information. Though he tried to appear uninterested, he caught Aizawa giving him a knowing look from the side. “I’d appreciate it if you didn’t blab *all* of our training plans in front of one of my students.”

Vlad King looked at Aizawa, confused, before looking around and spotting Izuku. “Oh! Midoriya, right?”

“Y-yes, sir!” Izuku replied, voice chipper but shaky as he addressed the homeroom teacher of Class 1-B for the first time since starting at UA. Though the two classes were next to each other, they really didn’t interact much outside of lunch times or joint training scenarios. Aizawa and Vlad King didn’t teach each others’ class like the other teachers, so Izuku never had an opportunity to officially meet the Blood Hero.

The tall, muscular man gave him a once over, then nodded to him. “Good to see you’re out and about. We all heard about your injury during the exams.”

Izuku nervously thanked him, glancing at Aizawa as he did. *We? Does he mean the UA staff?* Aizawa seemed to know what was going through the teen’s mind and gave an apologetic shrug before taking the last of the bags from the bus and tossing them onto the Class 1-B pile.

“Well,” Vlad continued, turning to wish the driver of his own bus farewell, “at least Aizawa had the sense *not* to work his students to death.” The white-haired hero sent a sarcastic look to his dark-haired counterpart. “For the first time in his life.” Vlad added.

Aizawa scowled, “When have I ever—”

“Eraserhead! Vlad King! Over here!” The trio turned to look where the female voice called to them from near the cabin entrance. Stepping out of the black car Izuku remembered from the cliff was Mandalay in her red outfit and the young child with the spiky hat. The two UA homeroom teachers and Izuku walked over to where Mandalay stood by the cabin entrance. The child scowled up at them, but did so from a position behind the Pussycat leader.

“I’m going to get lunch going. Ragdoll says neither of the classes are even close to getting here, so it’ll just be us five.” Mandalay held open the door to the cabin to allow them inside. “I’ll show you your rooms.”

Both pros and Izuku thanked her as they followed her inside the warm, homey cabin with their bags in tow. It was quite large, larger than Izuku imagined when they saw it from the clifftop. *It would have to be pretty big,* he thought, *to hold 40 students at a time. But they surely didn’t build this with training students in mind? Maybe it’s for large-scale rescues? Housing groups who get lost in the woods? Or to house all the rescue teams?*

“That’s right, young man! We need the space if there’s any large groups out helping us in our searches!” Mandalay responded as Izuku flushed under his freckles. Aizawa gave a small smirk at the mutter-storm of his ward. He made a mental note to work with Izuku on his self-awareness in the future, but for now he let it slide.

Izuku mumbled an embarrassed, “Th-that makes sense…” He looked away from Mandalay, and as he did, he caught sight of the kid giving him an odd look. Their gazes met for several moments before the child gave a huff and turned to face the direction they were headed. Izuku frowned slightly, wondering what the look was for.

Mandalay stopped in front of two doors with “Exec Suite” written across it. “Here’s your room, Eraser, Vlad.” She turned her head slightly to the side to look at Izuku, continuing, “The students are a little further down.”

Aizawa opened his door enough to toss his duffle bag inside and shut

the door before gesturing for Mandalay to lead the way. Vlad opened his door and said, “I’ll meet you out by the kitchen in a few minutes, Mandalay.” He shut the door behind him as Mandalay led Aizawa and Izuku further in, passing through a large space with a few couches and tables scattered about. Multiple fireplaces lined the walls, but appeared as if they hadn’t been used recently. They continued down a hallway that branched off in several places, some intersecting hallways leading outside, and some moving further in.

“Here we are!” Mandalay exclaimed, stepping in front of a set of double doors. She pushed them open to reveal a room full of futons and cots, all empty. Several sinks lined the far wall, with doors leading to what Izuku assumed were toilet stalls. “This room is for the boys. The girls are across the hall in the smaller rooms.”

Izuku stepped into the space. It was certainly large enough to hold both classes, and a rapid count of the cots confirmed that. He wondered how mixing the two classes together like this would work out, his thoughts flying to Monoma in 1-B. He had no doubt the competitive boy’s nature would make the first few nights sleeping here difficult, but he was optimistic that they all could get along. *If there’s a contest at the end of the camp, that may be just wishful thinking,* he thought.

Internally shrugging, he dropped his bags on one of the futons near the door and pulled out the Mirko-themed water bottle Hizashi found while shopping last week. He always admired Mirko as a hero, being one of the few that fought mostly quirkless like Eraserhead, but his love of All Might rivaled that admiration to a far greater degree, and, as such, he owned almost no hero merch for the Rabbit Hero. That and he only had so much pocket money to spend on merchandise. He had to be selective in what he bought and asked for at birthdays.

The thought of his hero merch caused a wave of sadness to pass through him as he remembered what little remained of his collection. All Might’s gift was certainly the best item he owned, even considering the items he sold before the final exams, but the good memories he associated with all his previous items were long gone. The excitement of unwrapping a new All Might figure, or finding a new poster at the store, daydreaming about attending more Hero Cons to get the latest pre-release merch. His mother surprising him sometimes with All Might candies when he was sick. Wiping the gathering liquid from the corners of his eyes, Izuku sniffed and turned to face the two pros as they chatted between themselves. *No more crying. You’re fine. Mom will come home and everything will go back to*

*how it was before. Get a hold of yourself! No one wants to be around someone who cries like a baby all the time!*

"…the bathhouse. We drew up a schedule so it doesn't get overcrowded if you want to look that over."

"I'll take a look after lunch. Any issues with that side menu I sent over?"

"None at all. Most of the ingredients we already had, so everything should be available for your student."

"Thank you, that makes things easier." Aizawa watched Izuku as the teen approached, a small frown creasing his brow as he noted the slight redness to Izuku's eyes. He signed one of the few phrases he knew Izuku would recognize easily, *'You okay?'* The green-eyed teen spotted the small hand gesture, then gave Aizawa a brief smile with a nod. Nodding back, the darkly-dressed teacher turned to address Mandalay again. "I can't say I'll be much help with cooking, but I can assist with cleanup."

Mandalay laughed, waving for them to follow her as she strode back through the cabin to where the large lounge was. "No worries, Eraser. I think Vlad and I can handle it. I'll take you up on the cleanup offer, though! I'm sure young Kota here would love a break from helping me do the dishes."

The child huffed, crossing his arms and glaring at all of them. The two adults didn't seem to react to Kota's attitude, but Izuku wondered at the behavior. The four of them exited the cabin into a clearing with several fire pits and tables set up. One of the tables had a multitude of knives and cutting boards, as well as a large sink. Off to the side, a stone well with a bucket hanging over the opening was the only landmark between them and the tree line. Izuku could see smoke and dirt rising in the distance, underneath the cliff they stopped at earlier that day. The dust cloud didn't appear much closer than where Pixie-Bob dropped the rest of his classmates into the forest.

Vlad King, wrapping an apron around his waist, called out to Aizawa, "Your class hasn't made much progress, Eraser!"

The Erasure Hero ignored the jab, sitting at one of the long tables and gesturing for Izuku to sit next to him. He addressed Mandalay, "Leave all the dishes, I'll wash up."

"Thanks, Eraser!" She turned to the small child next to her, "Do you

want to sit with Eraserhead and his student or help me cook?"

The grumpy kid looked back and forth between where Vlad was filling a pot with water from the well and where Aizawa was sitting. He glared at all of them, then kicked his foot against the dirt. Kota grumbled, "I don't want to cook…"

"Alright, sweety. I have a coloring book in my bag, would you like that?" Kota nodded sullenly, his chubby cheeks flushing. Mandalay hastily grabbed a bag from the black car she and Kota arrived in and came back, handing the coloring book and a box of crayons to the kid before joining Vlad King in the kitchen.

Aizawa stood, saying, "That reminds me. I'll be right back." He swiftly returned inside, leaving Kota and Izuku alone. The two looked at each other for a moment, before Izuku cleared his throat and introduced himself.

"H-hi, my name's I-Izuku." He held out a hand to shake. Kota said nothing, simply glaring at the offered hand and tightening his grip on his crayons and coloring book. Izuku held his hand out for a little longer, then dropped it when it was clear the child wasn't going to respond. "So…um…" Izuku stuttered, feeling awkward in the quiet between them. "Y-your name is Kota?" The kid nodded, glare still firmly fixed in place as he watched Izuku with contempt.

Izuku recognized the emotion behind that glare. It was one he saw on Kaachan's face many times before. When he was younger, he tried to ignore it, hoping Kaachan would eventually want to be around him like when they were kids. After junior high though, Izuku realized that would never happen, and just accepted it as his lot in life. It wasn't like the rest of the class treated him any different. Hate, contempt, disgust. These were emotions Izuku was quite accustomed to seeing on other people's faces when he was quirkless. Kota hated Izuku, that was clear. The teen simply had no idea why.

"I'm s-sorry…did I do s-something to m-make you not l-like me?" He asked nervously, his right hand scratching the skin under his cast. He wasn't sure why this little kid, who couldn't be more than six years old, was causing a sense of anxiety to rise in his chest, but he felt it nonetheless. Felt the hair on the back of his neck sticking up, felt his hands shaking, felt his breathing rapidly increasing.

Finally, Kota spoke, his voice tight and angry. "You're one of those stupid hero students, aren't you?"

Izuku stammered, his tongue feeling like a lead weight in his mouth, "I…w-well I *am* a hero s-student, but s-stupid is a bit m-mean to s—"

Kota interrupted, his lips turned down in an angry frown. "Why aren't you in the forest running around like the rest of your stupid class?"

"I-I can't…y-you really s-shouldn't call people s-stu—" Izuku didn't know what to do in the face of such anger. He felt himself slipping into old habits as he tried to make himself look smaller, despite the fact that he was nearly twice as tall as Kota. All he could think was if he had his burn cream and whether Kaachan would be in a good mood today and if he could escape getting his backpack thrown into the pond again oh his mom would be so mad if his phone got wet *gotta keep that in my pocket* but maybe Kaachan will push *him* into the pond today crap crap crap *what do I do!*

"You're all trying to be stupid heroes so you can go fight and show off and get killed by the idiot villains. Sounds pretty stupid to me!"

"I-I d-don't w-wan-want to sh-show off…" Izuku mumbled. An image of Kaachan from middle-school washed over his thoughts. *Stupid deku! Stop trying to impress the teachers with your nerdy notebooks! They're not worth showing off; you just look like a groveling creep!*

"You're all the same! Stupid heroes!" Izuku, caught up in his rising panic, didn't see the small fist headed directly for his groin until it was too late to dodge. He braced himself for the pain, accepting Kaachan's punishment. He was right, no one cares about a worthless deku. The least he could do is act as target practice for people like Kaachan who could actually make something of themselves. *Worthless, useless, unwanted, just go home to your mommy!* Kaachan's voice taunted. Another voice, Izuku's own, broke in. *But she's not there. She left. She left you alone, remember? She didn't want a useless son like you weighing her down.*

The sound of fabric rapidly wrapping around something and snapping tight caught Izuku's ears, along with the soothing dark tone of Aizawa from behind him. "That's not a nice place to hit people."

Izuku opened his eyes, not realizing he had shut them in the first place and glanced around, quickly taking in his surroundings. Kota's tiny fist was held in place a few short centimeters from the front of Izuku's pants by the gray fabric of Aizawa's capture weapon. The little kid looked furious and embarrassed, his face flushed red from both emotions as he looked away from the pro hero holding him in place.

“Kota! Were you about to *hit* him? I know you were taught better than that!” Mandalay stalked over from her spot in the kitchen, an apron covered in various colored paw prints wrapped over her hero costume. She grabbed Kota’s hand, putting the coloring book and crayons on the table and dragged him over to the kitchen as Aizawa released his other hand from his capture scarf. “If you can’t play nice with our guests, you get to help me in the kitchen.” Kota started crying and whining as Mandalay put him to work stirring a pot of noodles, Vlad King shooting a look over at them as the young child threw a tantrum.

Aizawa quirked an eyebrow at the Blood Hero, then turned to sit down at the table, pushing Kota’s coloring stuff to the side. He glanced over at Izuku momentarily, then did a double take. Izuku’s face was pale and clammy as he scratched heavily at his left hand. His erratic breathing caused his chest to move up and down in stuttering heaves; green eyes darted around rapidly as they took in the space around them, lingering on doors and the empty woods.

*Looking for escape routes* , Aizawa thought. His Problem Child was having a panic attack. A rather major one if the last week’s worth of similar instances was anything to go by. He understood the anxiety of watching Hizashi leave them this morning was a trigger for Izuku, his mother abandoning him being a rather traumatic and recent experience. As he reached over to stop the teen from ripping the delicate skin of his hand with his nails, Aizawa wondered what might have triggered this attack.

“Squeeze my hand kid. There you go. Squeeze as hard as you need to, I can take it.” Izuku’s grip on his hand increased suddenly at the assurances as the kid gasped, scared tears dripping down his cheeks. Green curls bounced as the teen’s head swiveled rapidly.

“You’re alright; you’re safe. I’m right here.”

Izuku heard the words as if they were coming through thick glass: muffled, indistinct. It took him several moments to recognize who was speaking to him. *Aizawa* , he thought as he hyperventilated. *Why is he here? He doesn’t work at Aldera.*

“I'm going to put my arm around your shoulders. Squeeze my hand once for yes, twice for no.”

Izuku felt his arms shaking, though wondered at the stiffness and slight ache in his left arm. He glanced around, not recognizing his surroundings. *Where did all these trees come from? Aldera just had a few*

*on the school grounds.* The voice sounded warm and safe, and he ached for those feelings in this strange place. Courtyard? Park? Where was he? He squeezed once. A warmth spread across his back, rubbing circles in his shoulder blades.

Izuku focused on the slow circles over his shoulders as he squeezed the large hand in his tightly. He used those two things to ground himself, still not recognizing where he was. Panic fought to overcome the soothing motions on his back, and he felt his vision narrowing.

“I’m going to count out your breathing like we did in the hospital, remember?”

Izuku did remember, but the memory was fuzzy, hazy. Aizawa sitting with him in Musutafu hospital. His arm was broken. How did it break? *In the final exam. You used your quirk and broke it.* Izuku was quirkless though, wasn’t he? That’s what everyone teases him about. He’s quirkless.

Isn’t he?

“Breathe in for one…two…three…”

Izuku sucked in a deep breath, his lungs filling fully and then some as he tried to keep inhaling like the smooth, low voice told him to.

“Hold for four…three…two…one…and exhale for one…two…”

Izuku is quirkless. He is. *But I used my quirk and broke my arm.* He felt the truth of both statements, and the confusion only served to make his shoulders tense under the warm…hand? That’s right. Aizawa was sitting next to him. He followed his teacher’s counting for several more cycles, his vision clearing slightly. Even with recognition of who’s hand he was squeezing and who was rubbing his back, Izuku still didn’t know where he was.

“Wh-where…?” He gasped, squeezing Aizawa’s hand tightly.

“Breathe out. We’re at the summer camp. We just arrived about thirty minutes ago by bus.”

It took several moments for the words to sink in, but Izuku knew they were true. Aizawa never lied to him. *Aldera never did a summer camp. Why am I here? Why am I not at home with mom?*

“You’re here because you’re in the hero course at UA and this is part

of your training. Do you remember which class you're in?"

Izuku nodded, mumbling, "One A…?" *That's right, I passed the entrance exam because of rescue points.*

"Correct. You've got a couple friends in your class, do you remember their names?"

Memories flooded his mind. A tall boy plastered to the wall above a packed doorway like an emergency exit sign. A girl dressed in a pink jumpsuit vibrating excitedly as Thirteen introduced them to the USJ. "U-Uraraka and Iida…"

"Good. What are their quirks and hero names?"

"Uravity and Ingenium," Izuku replied immediately, the information flowing freely as he slowly regained his mental bearings. *You go to UA, not Aldera. You're not in middle school anymore.* "Quirks: zero gravity and engine."

"Good job. What's *your* quirk and hero name? Do you remember?"

*I'm quirkless. But…* He remembered the entrance exam, his legs breaking under the strain as he launched himself into the air and smashed his fist into the giant zero-pointer robot. *But I* am *quirkless!*

Confusion washing over him, he stuttered, "I-I don't…"

The warm hand on his back continued the slow circles, the motion becoming almost hypnotizing in its rhythmic cycle. "That's okay. Your quirk is super strength. You can power up your muscles to a significant degree."

Izuku nodded, remembering the green lightning on his skin from his quirk. He muttered, "One for All…" Something tugged at the corner of his mind. Something about the quirk. Something he wasn't supposed to say.

The hand on his back paused momentarily before continuing. "There you go. Remember your hero name now?"

Izuku shook his head, wracking his brain for what he decided on. He remembered staring at a blank whiteboard for a long time in class while several of the other students were praised or rejected for their hero names. *Did I go with Mighty Kid? Or All Smile? Or did I use mom's suggestion of Bunny Might? I can't remember!*

“Your hero name is Deku.”

He froze. *Worthless deku, can’t even get above a seventy on your homework. How can you possibly hope to get into UA? They’ll never take a quirkless creep like you!*

*No* , he thought viciously, *I made it in! See? I’m in UA!*

*Liar,* a voice that simultaneously sounded like Kaachan and his mother whispered. *We know you don’t have a quirk. You had to be given one. All Might only gave it to you because you were the only person who knew his secret. He never would have chosen you otherwise!*

*It’s not true,* he refused. *You’re wrong. He told me I could be a hero! That I have a hero’s heart!*

*Sounds like a load of crap,* Kaachan sneered, tossing his analysis notebook into the fish pond. *You should give All Might back his power and take a swan dive off the roof like I said. Useless deku, you probably wouldn’t even do* that *right.*

*Honey,* his mother said in her soft tone that never truly reached her eyes, *you’re quirkless. It’s dangerous for people like you to get involved with fighting. Leave it to the heroes with useful quirks.*

“Izuku?”

*You probably cheated your way into the hero course. No way they gave you any points in that exam.*

*Sweety, quirkless heroes don’t exist. It’s just nonsense. You can’t be a hero.*

“Izuku, I need you to breathe.”

*Tch. Get the hell out of my school, deku. No one wants you around.*

*You’ll just get hurt. I don’t want to pay to get you patched up every week, honey. It’s expensive to find doctors that treat quirkless people.*

“Izuku, squeeze my hand if you can hear me.”

*You’re a bug under my boot, deku. Better get out of my way.*

*Listen to Katsuki, honey. He’s going to be a great hero one day.*

“Izuku, kid! Breathe, dammit!”

*Hey, look! You can read Izuku's name like deku! Ha! Look at deku, he's crying!*

*Katsuki wouldn't say that, honey. He's got a great career as a hero ahead of him. Don't go around saying false things about him. What if it hurts his reputation as a hero?*

A solid impact hit his back, and Izuku gasped in a lungful of air that he didn't realize his chest was screaming for. His vision had gone dark, and the breath cleared it almost immediately as he felt his heart hammering against his chest. He felt the sting of tears in his eyes and wetness across his cheeks. His nose dribbled onto his top lip as he breathed heavily through his mouth.

Izuku felt the need to get away rise up inside him rapidly, and bolted from the table. He heard a voice call after him, but couldn't distinguish what was said as he rushed through the cabin. He wasn't really sure where he was going, still unfamiliar with the layout, but he continued at a near sprint through the building. He turned several times down hallways, before finding a door that appeared to lead outside again. He dashed through it, finding himself in front of a steaming pool of water.

*Bathhouse,* his mind supplied. He quickly ran to a corner that wasn't immediately visible from the door he just came through and tucked himself into it. His knees pulled up to his chin, and his arms wrapped around his shins as best he could, he slowly rocked back and forth. He clenched his eyes tightly shut, but that didn't stem the tears dripping from them.

*What am I doing here? I'm useless! Kaachan is right, I never should have applied. What can I possibly do that he can't? All Might gave his quirk to the most undeserving student at UA!*

The sounds of bubbling water and birds in the trees surrounding the cabin accompanied the frequent and heavy sniffling from Izuku for several minutes while he cried. His chest felt like it would crush his heart under the weight of his emotions. He was just a giant cry baby, he heard it from Kaachan enough to know it was true. No one his age cried this much, not even girls! And here he was, three times in one day. It wasn't even a new record.

He heard the door to the bathhouse open, then close a moment later. Boots crunched against the gravel at a steady, sedated pace. Izuku didn't look up, already recognizing the measured steps of Aizawa. *He's*

*making sure I know he's coming, otherwise I wouldn't hear him at all.*

The boots moved past him to the opposite side of the door. He heard several scuffs and a slight grunt as the pro hero dropped to sit on the ground a short distance from him. Neither said anything, just the trickling water floating in the quiet space between them.

*Why hasn't he said anything yet? I ran away, shouldn't he be reprimanding me?* After several moments of silence, Izuku dared to peek at his teacher. The man sat with his legs stretched out in front of him, his back against the wall and dark eyes watching the steam rise from the hot springs. He didn't seem to notice Izuku watching him, or if he did, he didn't turn to catch his gaze. Izuku thought it might be the latter. The man was too observant to miss him peeking.

They sat for another 30 seconds, not saying a word while Izuku stared at Aizawa, before the man finally spoke. "The water looks nice, doesn't it?"

Izuku blinked at the seemingly random comment. He lifted his head further from its position buried in his knees, studiously ignoring the large wet patch on his uniform pants. Watery green eyes gazed out at the steamy water for a moment before he replied shakily, "Y-yeah, it d-does." He returned his gaze to Aizawa, who still hadn't looked over at him.

"I'm going to stick my feet in. Want to join me?" Aizawa's dark eyes meet Izuku's green ones as he tilted his head. Izuku glanced between his teacher, the pool, and the door back into the cabin. The residual panic from before told him to run off again, find somewhere safe to be alone and just cry, but the hot water on his feet sounded like heaven to his frazzled nerves. And he was sick of crying. And so tired.

"S-sure…" Izuku mumbled, slowly detaching his arms from their gridlocked position around his shins. He saw Aizawa stand and brush off the back of his hero costume. The man walked slowly over to Izuku and held out a hand to help him up. Izuku took it, reminded of the time Aizawa sat with him while he threw up in the hospital. He was gently pulled to his feet and the two of them moved over to the edge of the pool. Aizawa quickly shucked his boots and rolled up his loose pants to the knee, dropping quickly to dip his pale feet into the hot water.

Izuku followed suit, sitting down on Aizawa's left to untie his red boots one-handed. He glanced curiously at his teacher, who dropped

his more serious school demeanor for the one he showed at the apartment with Hizashi. *And me* , his tired mind supplied. *But only because I'm living in their house.* Shoving his socks into his boots, he pulled his uniform pants up and over his knees, hoping to hide the tear stains on the turquoise fabric. His feet slipped into the hot water and he immediately felt the relaxing heat take effect, calming him.

He watched as Aizawa leaned back, his hands braced behind him as he slowly swung his legs through the water. Izuku glanced curiously at his teacher, who seemed wholly unconcerned with what happened out on the picnic table. Anxiety still hung like a sword over Izuku's head, though significantly less intense than ten minutes prior. His gut twisted at the thought of his embarrassing breakdown and subsequent flight from Aizawa. He realized now that the man was trying to calm him the entire time when he couldn't remember where he was, and just that fact had him flushing red and looking away to his pale, skinny feet in the water.

A flash of color and dark lines stood out on Aizawa's otherwise pale calf as he scissor kicked his feet slowly through the water of the hot spring. It caught Izuku's eye immediately, the contrast apparent in the bright summer sun. He leaned forward, interested, then stopped himself, realizing that it might be rude.

Aizawa, as always, noted the aborted movement and paused. Then he straightened his left leg so it was lifted out of the water and the tattoo was in full view: two bands of ink wrapping around his entire calf just below the knee. "You can look if you want," he grunted, dark eyes watching Izuku with a calm unconcern.

Izuku shook his head, stuttering, "Th-that's okay, Aizawa-s-sensei. I-I didn't m-mean to pry…" His green eyes looked away from the object of his curiosity. *That's Aizawa's personal business, quit being rude! Stupid deku…*

"It's not prying, Problem Child." Aizawa grunted as he lifted his leg out of the water and propped his wet ankle on the opposite knee. He wiped some of the water droplets from his skin and gestured to the tattoo. "You can look."

Izuku glanced up at Aizawa for one final reassurance with his lip between his teeth before leaning forward to examine the two circles of ink around the dark-haired man's calf. One was a string of music notes interspersed with a tiny pair of Present Mic's sunglasses and a loudspeaker. A small smile tugged at Izuku's lips as he examined the

tattoo that was clearly depicting the Voice Hero. The other tattoo was a solid ring of light blue clouds with a pair of yellow aviator goggles looped over the top of a bo staff that appeared to lean against the clouds like they were solid. Something about it rang a bell at the back of Izuku's mind when he saw the color and the goggles.

Frowning, he pointed to the cloud tattoo. "D-does Hizashi h-have that t-too? On h-his arm?"

Aizawa hummed in agreement. "We got them at the same time. He doesn't have this one though," he pointed at the music notes. "He has one for me instead."

Izuku tapped his fingers against his thigh as he gazed at the cloud tattoo. *Does it represent someone they both know then? If they have tattoos for each other and they're married, it must be someone they're close to. But I've never heard them mention anybody while I've been with them other than the teachers at UA, and that doesn't match anyone at school.*

Realizing he stared at Aizawa's tattoos for longer than was polite, Izuku tore his eyes away from the images and looked out over the steaming water. He was lost in thought for several minutes as he tried to puzzle out who the clouds were for and also bring himself back to equilibrium. His stomach still clenched uncomfortably, and his eyes itched from all the crying. He could feel the sting of fresh scratches on the back of his left hand. His breathing, though even, felt shallow and unsatisfying.

His curiosity unable to be sated, Izuku asked, "A-Aren't those your goggles?" He pointed at the yellow eyewear within the cloud tattoo.

Aizawa nodded, fishing under his capture weapon to pull the goggles in question off from around his neck. He fiddled with the side, pulling a hidden latch to reveal a tiny hidden compartment as Izuku watched. Inside was a small folded piece of paper, which Shouta laid out flat and handed to the teen.

Izuku held the paper, which he now realized was an old photograph, carefully as he examined it. He saw what could only be a much younger Aizawa and Hizashi in their school days, complete with early styles of their current hero costumes. But between the two young heroes stood a third, with light, fluffy blue hair and a bandage over his nose. The teen was smiling hugely, his arms around Aizawa and Hizashi as they all looked at the photographer. Around the middle boy's head were the yellow aviator goggles, shaped in the same way

as Aizawa's, but with glass instead of horizontal bars where his eyes would be.

Izuku saw the bo staff and goggles in the picture mirrored the ones in Aizawa's tattoo. Curious, he asked, "What are the clouds for?"

"His quirk," Aizawa responded. "He could make solid clouds that he rode around on. Our classroom was on the second floor, and he still made a point to come in through the window."

Izuku smiled at the obvious fondness in Aizawa's voice as he looked back at the picture. "Is he your friend? He doesn't teach at UA, does he?"

Aizawa sighed, twirling his goggles. "His name was Oboro. He was our best friend. He died in our second year, during our work study. Crushed under a building."

"Oh," Izuku mumbled, suddenly feeling awful for even asking. "I'm s-sorry. I sh-shouldn't have…"

"It's alright." Aizawa waved his apology away, his face showing no sign of distress. "You're allowed to be curious. And it was a long time ago."

Izuku handed the picture back, which Aizawa tucked into his goggles again. Goggles that had the exact same shape and shade as the boy's in the photo. A memento. The teen turned to look at the water again, an odd feeling in his chest that was unrelated to his earlier distress.

Aizawa let them sit in silence, appearing perfectly comfortable with the stillness between them as he dropped his foot back into the water. Izuku dipped his hand into the pool and used it to scrub the tear stains off his cheeks. He sniffed heavily, his breath calming to a more normal state. Feeling as if he should say something, but not really knowing what to change the topic to, he mumbled, "My m-mom always thought p-people with tattoos w-were criminals…"

Aizawa snorted, dark eyes gleaming with humor. "It's not an uncommon thought. Most people in Japan didn't have tattoos unless they were part of the Yakuza. That only changed recently."

Izuku nodded, storing the tidbit of information away. He didn't know how to continue the conversation, all his earlier excitement about the camp drained from him in the wake of emotional upheaval. The pair returned to silence for several moments before Aizawa turned his head

to gaze at the green-haired teen. “Can I ask you something?”

Izuku thought for a moment, fairly certain he knew what the question would be. He broke down in front of three pro heroes because a six-year-old called him stupid. Izuku flushed in embarrassment at the very thought and rubbed his face to hide the redness in his cheeks. “Um… o-okay…”

Aizawa replied, “If you don’t want to talk about it, you don’t have to. I’d like to know what happened, but I won’t force you to discuss anything. We can keep talking about other things too, if that’s what you want to do.”

Izuku knew if he really had his choice, he would just sit in silence because he had no idea what to say. What do you talk about with your teacher-turned-guardian after you cried like a baby in front of three adults and a child and accidentally brought up bad memories of someone who died? *Useless crybaby deku. Just a nuisance.*

“I-it’s okay, A-Aizawa-sensei. Y-you can ask.”

Aizawa paused, dark eyes scanning Izuku’s face for several moments. “Alright, kid,” he sighed. “But if you don’t want to answer something just pass, and I’ll move on. Like twenty questions.”

Izuku nodded, fiddling with the folded up edge of his pants. The dampness on his pant knees from crying earlier rubbed on his skin. He focused on the feeling, letting it distract him, even for a moment.

“Do you know what a trigger is?”

Izuku frowned, confused. “L-Like on a g-gun?”

Aizawa squinted at the reflection of the noonday sun on the water. He grunted, “No. I mean in regard to mental health.” Izuku bit his lip, unsure what his teacher meant. Aizawa seemed to understand immediately. “A trigger, when we’re talking about mental health specifically, is something that causes you to feel anxiety or panic or other negative feelings. It could be a sound, certain phrases or words, or even a place or person. Does that make sense?”

Izuku nodded slowly, tired eyes watching the swirling steam rise from the bath. His feet were quite warm, and the hot water was soothing. “S-so like a s-soldier hearing a g-gun fire and having f-flashbacks?”

“Similar, yes.” Aizawa pushed up from his leaned back position to

better face his young ward, sighing. “Often, it’s not so much flashbacks as just heightened anxiety or sadness. But if it’s bad enough, it can cause flashbacks like PTSD. Still with me?”

Izuku nodded again, asking, “I u-understand. B-but why…” He felt his confidence drop and take the rest of his question with it. He knew where this was going, simply unsure how it would get there. *Does Aizawa-sensei think I’m crazy? But he was so forceful when he said I was normal earlier. Was he lying? Or just trying to be nice? No, Aizawa hasn’t lied to me before. So, then…*

“Why am I asking about it?” Aizawa ran a hand through his long black hair, pulling it out of his face and watching Izuku out of the corner of his eye. Izuku nodded sullenly. “Because I think there may be some things that cause you to feel anxious or unsafe. If you’re willing, I’d like to know what they are so we can avoid them.”

Izuku’s green eyes shot up quickly to meet Aizawa’s warm black ones; he raised his free hand up to waive it in a placating manner, an anxious smile on his face as he tried to appear nonchalant. “Oh n-no, Aizawa-sensei! I-I don’t f-feel that w-way at all! R-really! I d-don’t think I-I have um t-triggers o-or—”

“Anxiety?” Aizawa’s dark eyes watched him carefully, still with that warmth underneath his usually stern exterior. “Nervousness? Stress?” He reached up and tapped Izuku’s cheek with the back of his forefinger. “Bad habit of biting a hole in your lip?”

Izuku released his bottom lip from the vice-like grip his teeth had on it, unaware that he even started doing it. He flushed red under his freckled cheeks.

“I’m not trying to make you feel bad or embarrass you. It’s okay to feel anxious or nervous. That’s completely normal. For example,” Aizawa offered, “Falling buildings remind me of when my friend Oboro died. It brings back the memory. Makes me nervous that something similar will happen to Hizashi, or someone else I care for.”

Izuku watched the ripples of water as he listened to Aizawa. What he said made sense, even if Izuku didn’t believe it was normal to act the way he did whenever something upset him.

When Izuku didn’t respond, Aizawa continued, “But having a panic attack so intense that you forget where you are and stop breathing is pretty serious.”

Izuku felt several emotions rising in his stomach: shame, first and foremost, then that jittery nervousness that always followed him whenever there was a confrontation brewing. Logically, knew Aizawa wouldn't hurt him and only wanted to help, but he couldn't help the tenseness in his legs, the sudden urge to scoot away, to get up and hide somewhere even more remote than this bathhouse. Last, he felt an intense desire for physical touch, something completely at odds with the other emotions warring within him.

His hand inched closer to Aizawa's before he even realized what he was doing, but he hastily pulled it back to clench at his pant leg. Aizawa saw the movement and adjusted his posture so he could lean one arm behind Izuku and rest his much larger hand over Izuku's. Four red half-circles adorned the back of the Erasure Hero's pale hand, and Izuku's eyes widened rapidly. He sobbed out, "I'm s-sorry! I d-didn't mean to!" He pulled his hand out from under Aizawa's and tucked it into his chest, heart beating in his throat when he realized how much damage he'd done to his teacher's skin. *Look what you did! You hurt a pro hero! Worthless deku!*

"I can handle a couple scratches, kid. I promise, I've had a lot worse crush my hand than you before." Aizawa held out his hand, silently asking for Izuku to put his hand back. Izuku scanned Aizawa's face, which held nothing but calm reassurance, before setting his hand back down nervously. His heart still raced and his shoulders found a new home right below his ears.

The dark-haired man let the silence linger for several moments before he asked, "Was it something Kota said to make you feel anxious?"

Izuku started to deny it, but paused as he recalled the short conversation between himself and the young child. He slowly nodded. He felt a gentle squeeze on his hand, which was now warming up to match his feet in the water. In the back of his mind, the part that never stopped thinking about heroes, he wondered how Aizawa could stand to wear his black jumpsuit all day when he was so warm all the time.

The dark, gentle voice of his teacher asked, "What did he say that upset you?"

Izuku swallowed, eyes looking down at his knees as he slowly kicked his feet in the water. Shame began taking first place in the war of his emotions now that his craving for physical touch was satiated. He felt his face and ears heat up, but powered through the self-depreciating

thoughts.

“I-it’s really d-dumb…” He mumbled, embarrassed. Aizawa simply squeezed his hand in response, so Izuku took a breath and continued. “He umm…I d-don’t think he l-likes heroes, because he said w-we were all s-stupid for trying to b-be heroes and we’re j-just showing off.”

Aizawa hummed, his thumb rubbing over the back of Izuku’s hand. “While there are some heroes that are just in it for fame, I disagree with his assessment of you and your classmates. You all have potential to be great heroes.” Izuku sniffed and nodded. He was exceptionally proud of his classmates, especially after seeing how far they’d all come since the beginning of the year. *They’ll be amazing heroes. All of them!*

“So his opinion on heroes upset you?”

Izuku shook his head, “N-no! I know n-not everyone likes h-heroes. I…” He paused, not sure how to voice exactly what had happened. It seemed to come on so suddenly, the panic and the memories, some of which he hadn’t thought of in years. “I d-don’t know if I can exp-plain it…” he mumbled.

Aizawa nodded, “That’s alright. Take your time.”

The two sat in silence while Izuku organized his thoughts, Aizawa’s thumb rubbing soothing circles over the back of the teen’s hand. He was sure he would die of embarrassment over it later— *I’m holding the hand of a pro hero!*— but, for now, Izuku relaxed into the gentle motion.

*How much do I tell Aizawa-sensei? I can’t tell him about Kaachan. Mom’s right, that would ruin his career! He’ll be a great hero, and I can’t ruin that for him! And I also can’t say anything about being quirkless because then I’ll expose All Might’s secret! Yagi-San would never forgive me if I did that.*

Frustrated tears filled his already red eyes as he realized there was no way to explain without either betraying All Might or hurting Kaachan’s career. He was well and truly stuck. His mother’s voice drifted across his memories, *Katsuki didn’t push you, honey. You tripped and hit a lamppost, remember?*

Izuku started to speak, a lie fresh on his lips. “I-I…” The words caught in his throat, unable to be forced out. He breathed out several times as he stuttered around words that refused to be uttered. The tears in his eyes grew fuller and dropped into his cheeks as he whimpered low in

the back of his throat. He couldn't say it. He couldn't lie to Aizawa. "I'm s-sorry!" He sobbed; tears flowed down his cheeks freely as his stomach twisted into knots and his heart clenched painfully. At that moment, he wasn't truly sure who he was talking to: his mother or Aizawa.

Strong arms wrapped fully around his shoulders and brought him in close to Aizawa's chest. Words mumbled into his hair accompanied his lurching breaths and forceful weeping, "Shhh…it's okay. I've got you. You're okay. Everything will be okay, Problem Child. I'm right here…"

Izuku's heart ached. *I'm sorry! I'm worthless! You don't want me around.*

Another, more timid voice replied, *I'm so lonely.*

*Can't even answer a question without crying like a baby!*

*How do I tell you everything?*

*You can just leave me. It'll be fine, I promise.*

*Please* please *don't leave me alone.*

*I won't be upset if you go.*

*I don't know what I'll do if you're not here.*

*I'm fine.*

*I'm drowning!*

"You'll be alright, kid. I'm right here with you. I won't leave you."

Izuku's hands clutched at the black fabric of Aizawa's hero costume as he struggled to breathe evenly. Aizawa's warm hands rubbed soothing paths across his back and upper arms as he continued the gentle stream of muttered words.

"It's okay. You're not alone. You're safe. I won't go anywhere."

Izuku hiccuped as he felt the tears ebbing away with Aizawa's calming words. He unconsciously tucked himself closer to the dark-haired man, his head of green curls coming to rest directly under Aizawa's chin. Izuku felt the slightest scratch of prickly facial hair against his scalp as Aizawa adjusted to the new position.

The two sat in silence as Izuku fully calmed down enough to speak again. “My eyes hurt…” he mumbled, feeling absolutely exhausted. He shut his eyes as they began to sting and throb.

Izuku felt Aizawa’s mouth quirk up into a smile against his hair. “Not surprised, Problem Child. You’ve had a rough day.”

“‘M sorry…”

“No need to apologize,” Aizawa admonished but without any real heat to the words. Izuku nuzzled closer, his nose tucked up right against Aizawa’s collar bone. He smelled like the apartment, like cozy nights watching movies, like Tofu sneaking into his room at night and falling asleep on his pillow. The thoughts instantly removed any residual anxiety Izuku was feeling, and his shoulders dropped from their previously high strung position. He felt himself slump against Aizawa as all the energy left his system.

Aizawa tilted his head to get a look at Izuku’s tired face. He smiled gently, though the teen couldn’t see it with his aching eyes closed. “Come on, kid. You should lay down.” He slowly pushed Izuku upright as the kid grumbled unhappily. Once he was sure the teen was holding himself up, he pulled his feet from the warm water, hastily drying them with the sleeve of his hero costume and slipping his boots back on. He watched Izuku for any sign of the teen falling over, but he simply watched Aizawa with tired green eyes that were ringed with red.

Aizawa helped Izuku to his feet. The teen picked up his bright red boots, but made no attempt to put them on, simply following his guardian as he held open the door to the cabin. They moved slowly through the large interior as Izuku shuffled tiredly next to Aizawa, and the man kept his arm around the teen’s shoulder. The pro hero walked Izuku up to the cot the kid dropped his things on earlier and helped him to lay down. He quickly unzipped the green sleeping bag Hizashi purchased at the mall and tossed it over the half-conscious kid.

Aizawa double-checked that Izuku was all settled before turning for the door. Just as he was about to open it, he heard Izuku quietly call out from behind him, “Shouta?” He turned, raising an eyebrow at the kid with surprise across his face. Izuku was propped up on his one good arm and blinking blearily at him, his sleeping bag scrunched around his legs.

“Yeah, kid?”

Izuku sniffed heavily and bit his lip, then muttered, “E-everyone m-made fun of me for w-wanting to be a h-hero, and m-my mom thought I w-wouldn’t be a-able to w-without…without…T-that’s why…with K-Kota…”

Shouta walked back to stand next to Izuku’s cot and ruffled the mess of curls on top of the boy’s head. “Well, you proved them all wrong, didn’t you? You’re here, and as far as this pro is concerned, you’ll make a great hero.”

Green eyes glanced up to meet dark ones with a small twinge of hope behind all the distress of the day. “Y-you think so?”

“I know so.” Aizawa winked and ruffled Izuku’s hair again. “Get some rest, Problem Child. I’ll come get you for lunch when it’s ready.”

He strode back to the door to the rest of the cabin. As he pulled it open, he heard Izuku mumble, “T-thanks, S-Shouta.”

“Of course, kid.” He shut the door, hearing the ruffling of Izuku snuggling into his sleeping bag as he did. He strode quietly down the hall and back outside to the kitchen area where Vlad King glanced up at him with flour dusted across his prominent nose.

“Midoriya alright?” Vlad called over the sizzling of the frying pans. Behind him, Mandalay looked over her shoulder with concern written across her face.

“He’ll be fine,” Aizawa grunted, rolling his shirt sleeves up as he approached the pile of dirty dishes. *It may take awhile, but he’ll be just fine.*

Chapter End Notes

> Hello my dear readers! Sorry for the longer wait between chapters, I had to take some time to figure out how the training camp will play out and also remember what even happens in the anime. It's been a minute since I've watched MHA haha! :D
>
> In other news: THIS STORY HAS OFFICIALLY REACHED 50,000 HITS! That's bananas! I'm super stoked! Y'all are awesome people and I'm so glad you're enjoying the story. :D
>
> Have a great week/weekend/day/whatever and I'll see you next

time!

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku scratched in his new notebooks rapidly as he sectioned out a number of pages for each of his classmates. *Should I give each ten pages or fifteen? There's twenty students, including me—does Aizawa-sensei want me to analyze myself too?—if I give fifteen per student, that's three-hundred pages total. I have two notebooks from Aizawa, each with eighty pages. That's not enough even if I just do ten pages each. I might have enough room if I write small now and transfer it into a few other notebooks later? Or maybe Aizawa-sensei has more notebooks? I suppose I could use the one All Might gave me, but that one's specifically for analyzing One for All and oh I still need to ask Shouta about using code to write my analysis but not right now. If I only have two notebooks I can only give eight pages per student, but if Aizawa-sensei has another notebook I can get twelve pages—*

His train of thought continued like this for several more minutes, before he looked around to ask Shouta for another notebook. He found the man standing next to Vlad King, both men staring out over the forest as they watched the plume of dust and smoke that accompanied Class 1-A as they grew closer to the cabin. Izuku stood from his seat at one of the picnic tables and hurried over to the pair of pro heroes. The tall grass of the clearing brushed against his bare legs as he moved. After Shouta woke him from his nap, he suggested changing into more comfortable clothes, so Izuku now sported the shorts he wore to leave the hospital and a white t-shirt that had 'formal wear' written across the front. The bed-head from his nap was not so easily fixed, and one side of his curls was significantly flatter than the other, giving him a lopsided appearance.

As Izuku approached the two UA teachers, he caught part of their conversation. "…any idea who the traitor could be?" Vlad King muttered quietly.

"I don't care to speculate. But there are very few people who know the location of this camp, and all of them are here except Nedzu."

"So, if there's an incident, we can narrow down the list significantly."

"If you want to think of it that way, yes." Both men paused as Izuku

got close enough for the noise of his approach to reach both of them. Aizawa turned, an eyebrow lifted in question. “Need something, Problem Child?”

Izuku tugged on the end of his t-shirt as he stuttered, “I-I was j-just wondering if you h-had another notebook, Aizawa-sensei? A-and if you wanted me t-to include myself in the a-analysis?”

The dark-haired man blinked slowly, then nodded. “Yes to both. Do you need the other notebook now?”

“I-if that’s alright?” He shifted his weight between his feet nervously as both heroes watched.

Aizawa nodded, then started moving toward the cabin. “I’ll be right back, Vlad.” He motioned for Izuku to follow him. Izuku stumbled slightly over his boots as he took off after the man’s much larger strides.

Vlad called over his shoulder to Aizawa as he turned to watch the dust cloud again, “Hurry back, Eraser. I want to see your face when my class gets here first!”

Aizawa rolled his eyes and didn’t respond to the jab. He and Izuku walked through the cabin, quickly coming to Aizawa’s room. Izuku stood at the door while Shouta dug through his large duffel bag. “How was lunch,” Shouta grunted as he pulled a spare pair of his hero boots out of his bag to make room. “Everything staying down?”

Izuku nodded with a slight smile, “I-it was really good. And I-I’m not feeling sick or…or anything.”

“Good,” Aizawa continued to dig through the bag until he reached the bottom, then pulled out another of the same notebooks he already provided to Izuku. “That’s the last one I have.”

“O-okay, thank you,” Izuku took the notebook gratefully, clutching it against his chest like it was a prized possession. Shouta stood and nodded, shutting the door behind him as they exited his room.

“I wanted to ask you earlier, but…” Shouta trailed off as he spoke, not really wanting to bring up the previous conversation and the negative emotions Izuku probably had with it. He cleared his throat and continued as Izuku’s curious green eyes stared up at him. “Did your mother ever have you attend any sort of counseling?”

Izuku tilted his head to the side as he contemplated the question and they both walked down the hallway toward the outside kitchen. “L-like quirk counseling?”

Shouta half-smiled, but shook his head. “I hope you attended that too, but no. Have you ever seen a psychologist or a therapist? Someone who talked with you about your anxiety or your thoughts? Anything that was bothering you?”

Izuku shook his head, looking up curiously at Aizawa. “I-I just went to quirk c-counciling once a year for s-school.”

Shouta hummed quietly as he held open the outside door for the teen and thought about Izuku’s response. Once a year was not very often for a quirk as powerful as Izuku’s. Even Shouta, with a fairly benign quirk, went three times a year at a minimum. Filing the information away for later and turning his thoughts back to the matter at hand, he replied, “I’d like to have you talk with me for at least a half hour each day while we’re at the camp.”

Izuku watched Aizawa carefully, confusion shining through the green irises. They stopped by the picnic table the teen was working at. “Wh-what will we t-talk about?”

“Anything you’d like,” Shouta shrugged, hands tucked into his deep pockets. “But, if you’re up for it, I’d like to continue where we left off earlier today.”

Izuku sat in his previous spot and gazed over the open notebooks as he thought. It felt…good to talk to Shouta about his thoughts earlier, though he wished he wasn’t so much of a cry baby. Some small part of him relaxed when he told the pro hero about his classmates’ opinions on him from middle school and junior high, and the reassurance from Shouta afterwards felt like a soothing balm to an angry wound. *But* , he thought, *I’m sure Shouta isn’t interested in hearing all about that stuff. It’s ancient history! Nothing can be done about it now…*

Struggling with his inner monologue, Izuku bit his lip and asked, “W-why?”

“Same reason as before, kid. If I know what makes you feel upset or unsafe, I can help you avoid those things. Also,” Aizawa scratched at the area of his neck covered by the gray capture scarf, “talking about our problems often helps solve them, in a way.”

Izuku nodded, feeling he understood what the man meant. Nervously,

he questioned, “D-do we have to t-talk about…about what I said earlier?”

“No.” Shouta said casually, “We can talk about your day or your favorite heroes if you want. The topic will be up to you.”

“O-okay…” Izuku glanced up at Shouta, seeing the familiar warmth behind his bored gaze, but not feeling like the man was bored with *him* . That was a good feeling.

“Alright,” Shouta made to turn around. “We can start tomorrow. Today is a relaxing day for everyone.” He strode to stand next to Vlad King, who grinned and pointed at the closer dust cloud that marked Class 1-B’s progress.

“Looks like my class is doing much better than yours, Eraser!” The tired man simply grunted in reply, shoving his hands into his pockets and settling into a relaxed stance as the two pros watched the forest.

Izuku took a moment to compose his thoughts before returning to his task. He quickly spread the new notebook out with the other two, counting out pages in each until he had a twelve-page section separated for each student. He dog-eared the corners of each section and labeled them quickly with each student’s initials, then gave them all titles.

*Iida Tenya - Quirk: Engine*

*Uraraka Ochaco - Quirk: Gravity*

*Yaoyarozu Momo - Quirk: Creation*

*Bakugo Katsuki - Quirk: Explosion*

Izuku paused here, his hand trembling as he finished writing Kaachan’s quirk in his notebook. Frowning, the teen moved to turn the page, but his eyes wouldn’t look away from the section title at the top of the page. *Quirk: Explosion* . Izuku took in a deep breath, his lip between his teeth. *Everything is fine,* he assured himself. *You’re just prepping a notebook* . Forcing himself to move on, he completed the rest of the section headers in no time, trying to push the strange fixation on Kaachan away.

Izuku filled in what he knew of each student’s quirk and left space for additional notes for when he got to speak to each of them about it. *I’ll need at least two pages for quirk descriptions with limitations and benefits,*

*then another few pages for suggestions on support gear and costumes. Then at least five pages each for how best to utilize their quirks against the pro heroes Aizawa-sensei gave me and how to use their quirks for offense and defense. Maybe I need to keep a page for summarizing? Does Aizawa plan to read through every page when I turn this in? He only asked for three pages each…maybe it's too much…I can just provide him with a summary afterwards in a different notebook. Doesn't matter, I'll just write really small and if he needs it typed up later I can do that. Okay, one page each for the hero matchups? I might actually need more space than that for some of them, so maybe take a few pages from the offense/defense sections…*

Before Izuku realized how much time had passed while he was preparing his notebooks, he felt a slight chill come over him as the sun started to set. He also heard several voices complaining and growing louder, along with the sizzle of cooking vegetables from the kitchen. He looked around, puzzled that he didn't notice it was almost six o'clock. All four of the Wild Wild Pussycats crew were moving about in the kitchen prepping dinner. They were smiling and laughing with each other and the two UA home room teachers, though Aizawa looked bored as they attempted to tease him into a smile. From the forest, several figures were staggering toward the cabin, their student uniforms covered in dirt and sweat.

"Ha!" Vlad boomed from the kitchen. "I told you my class would be here first!"

"It wasn't a competition, Vlad," Aizawa grunted, leaning against the wooden post holding the pavilion above the multitude of stovetops and cutting boards. Both watched the students slowly make their way to the picnic tables and slump into the seats.

Izuku hastily cleaned up his mess of notebooks and pens to make room as the blond copy-quirk user from Class 1-B slid onto the bench across from him. The tired teen glanced curiously at Izuku before grunting hoarsely, "Did 1-A beat us here? I thought Vlad-sensei said we were first!"

Izuku shook his head as he stacked his notebooks on top of each other. "N-no, 1-A isn't here y-yet." He rubbed his arms as best he could with one in a cast, the chill of the cool forest air bringing goosebumps to his skin.

Monoma scrunched his eyebrows in confusion, "Then how are you here? Wait…" He looked over Izuku's casual attire and lack of dirty

skin. “You didn’t have to do the training?!”

Green eyes wide at the sudden intensity from the blond, Izuku stuttered, “Um…n-no. I d-didn’t…”

Monoma started to cackle uproariously, his arms splayed to each side dramatically as his head tilted back. Izuku watched the odd teen nervously, unsure why this information caused such a reaction.

“Not only,” Monoma howled, “did 1-B beat 1-A here, one of them didn’t even get the training! 1-B will crush 1-A next time we fight!”

Izuku looked at the overly dramatic blond strangely as he stood with his notebooks. Not knowing what to say and realizing that Monoma was too caught up in his hysterical laughter to notice him, he slipped into the cabin to put away his homework. He stowed the notebooks in his bag and pulled out his yellow All Might hoodie to slip on. He kept his broken arm in the sling under his jacket as he pulled over his head, not seeing any need to go through the difficult process of putting the sling back on one-handed, and headed back outside. The rest of 1-B were mingling around the picnic tables, most salivating at the smell of the cooking vegetables and rice. Izuku made to return to his previous spot, but saw it was occupied now. He instead found a spot in the corner of the seating area near where Aizawa and Vlad King were standing.

The Pussycats spent the next several minutes frying vegetables and fluffing the large pots of rice while the students relaxed; Aizawa started filling a bowl shortly before Mandalay pulled out the heavy spices. Izuku watched him curiously as he went through the line of pots and pans, rapidly filling the bowl with the delicious smelling food. Mandalay lightly seasoned the bowl before Aizawa brought the food over to Izuku at his spot on the edge of the picnic tables.

“Here you go, kid,” Aizawa grunted as he broke apart the wooden chopsticks in his hand and gave them to Izuku, who thanked him. “You’ll have to do this yourself for the rest of the camp,” he muttered. “The Pussycats aren’t going to cook for everyone again until the last day.”

“Th-that’s fine,” Izuku stuttered. “I could have g-gotten it myself today t-too, Aizawa-sensei.”

The dark-haired man shook his head with a slight smile and humor glinting in his eyes as he glanced at Izuku. “No. This way, I get to at least pretend I prepared a meal for you.”

Izuku let out a small giggle, a grin growing on his face as he remembered their trip to the ramen shop. He began to eat as they watched the students of Class 1-B starting to form a line when Mandalay announced dinner was ready. Izuku was halfway through his own bowl by the time the last of 1-B had their meals and were sitting down.

“Looks like your class is here,” Aizawa grunted, moving toward the edge of the forest as Izuku looked over to see several disheveled members of his class staggering out into the clearing, their white uniform shirts contrasting against the dark green backdrop of trees. His classmates quickly went through the dinner line once they realized food was available, and Izuku waved Iida and Uraraka over to his table.

The two hero students sat with a huff and immediately began downing water and shoving food into their faces. Giving them a moment to fill their stomachs, Izuku turned back to his own bowl, which was a significantly lighter color than the heavily seasoned curry in front of his friends. When Iida and Uraraka were temporarily satiated, they immediately launched into describing the training.

“It was incredibly difficult, especially without forewarning! This kind of training is exactly what I would expect from a training camp run by UA!” Iida chopped his hand through the air, though Izuku noted with some humor that the movement was neither as fast nor as precise as it usually was.

“But don’t you think it was a bit much? I mean, we could have gotten lost!” Uraraka slumped onto the table, her head laying on her folded arm as she sipped at her water.

“Ragdoll’s quirk w-would be able to f-find you easily if you g-got lost,” Izuku reminded her.

Uraraka brushed her brown hair out of her face and continued eating. “Oh yeah…I forgot about the other heroes here since we were just finding dirt monsters. You’re always so smart, Deku!”

Izuku felt his gut clench uncomfortably and suddenly the rice in his mouth felt like disgusting goo instead of the delicious meal he knew it was. Uraraka didn’t notice the strange expression on the green-haired teen’s face and continued, “I wish you could have been there though. Your quirk would have been amazing against those monsters! POW!” She punched her fist in front of her and accidentally knocked over her

water. “Ah!” Iida helped her clean up while Izuku remained frozen in his seat, a bite of rice half-way to his mouth.

*Useless. You can’t even use your quirk. You would have been dead weight out there, that’s why Aizawa kept you back. You’d drag everyone down with you.*

“Deku? Are you okay?”

“You do look rather pale, Midoriya. Are you quite alright?”

“I-I…” Izuku stammered, then was interrupted as Aizawa called over the heads of hungry students.

“Take your time to relax today. Your *real* training starts first thing tomorrow morning.” Aizawa stood next to the other pro heroes, Vlad nodding approvingly while the Pussycats formed their iconic pose.

“And you’ll be cooking for yourselves! So make sure you work together to make an excellent meal!” Ragdoll shouted. Izuku saw Kota scowling off to the side and remembered his conversation with Aizawa earlier.

*He reminded me of what everyone said in middle school, but he’s just a kid and he couldn’t have known that! It’s okay it’s okay it’s okay. You’re fine!* He started rubbing the back of his hand in a similar pattern to how Shouta did earlier and tried to force his thoughts to the training tomorrow instead of the twisting in his gut.

Once the announcements were finished, Uraraka turned back to Izuku with worry written on her face. “Are you okay? Did I say something wrong?”

Izuku shook his head with a shaky smile on his face. He remembered Shouta’s words from earlier that day. *“If it upsets you, I need to know so I can help you by avoiding it.”* Feeling incredibly nervous and not at all as confident as he knew he should be, he tentatively asked, “A-actually, I w-was wondering if-if you could call me I-Izuku i-instead of m-my hero name?”

Uraraka seemed initially surprised, but a large smile grew across her face. She bounced a little in her seat. “Sure! Sorry if it bothered you that I called you by your hero name! I didn’t mean to be rude or anything.”

“Oh, n-no! It w-was fine…” Izuku smiled at her, feeling relieved that

she hadn't questioned his request.

"Well, you both can call me by my given name too! Ochaco!"

Izuku nodded with a smile as she gave them permission, then turned to Iida, who pushed his glasses up on his nose and cleared his throat. "You may call me Tenya, if it pleases you." His tone was so serious and formal that both Izuku and Ochaco burst out laughing and were nearly drowned out by Tenya's confused shouting. "We're good enough friends that we *should* address each other by our given names! Why are you laughing?"

The trio continued to eat their respective dinners as the sun fully set and the light of the fires and the outside cabin lights were the only bright spots in a sea of forest green blackness. Aizawa sent the girls to the bathhouse shortly after dinner was cleaned up, and the boys about twenty minutes later. Izuku paused in the changing room as he was removing his hoodie. Truth be told, he had no desire to bathe with the other boys in his class, especially with the difficulty of wrapping the cast so it didn't get wet, the thick scar on his arm from his surgery, and the embarrassment from others seeing how thin he was. He would get more than one strange look from his classmates, that he was sure of, and without Aizawa there to dissuade Kaminari and Kirishima, he knew he would get bombarded with questions.

*Maybe…I shouldn't clean up? I took a shower this morning, and I didn't do any training myself, so I'm not dirty. Plus I forgot to pack anything to wrap my cast in. I knew I forgot something!*

"Hey, Midoriya! You coming?" Ojiro's voice called to him from the door to the steaming bathhouse, a towel wrapped around the teen's waist that barely covered his tail.

"C-coming!" Izuku called back, hurriedly folding his hoodie on the bench and rushing after his classmates. When he entered the steamy outside area, he saw most of the boys already in the water and chatting. None seemed to notice him as he tentatively moved around the edge of the pool to sit away from where the largest group of them were. His back to the divide between the ladies' and mens' bathhouses, he slipped off his shoes and dipped his feet into the hot water, sighing happily as the heat warmed up his chilly toes.

Tenya glanced over at him curiously and moved through the water so they could speak. "Are you not joining us?" The blue-haired boy was tall enough that most of his chest was out of the water, despite the

fact that he was in the ‘deep end.’

“I um…I-I took a s-shower this morning, and s-since I didn’t d-do the training…” Izuku shrugged, hoping that explanation would suffice.

“Ah, yes, of course. You would not be as dirty as those of us that endured the forest training.” Tenya nodded, dunking his head under the water momentarily.

Izuku watched everyone as they socialized, feeling like the odd one out despite Tenya wading near him. *They all fought against Pixie-Bob’s monsters together, but I had to sit out. I wonder what would have happened if Aizawa let me go with them…*

“T-Tenya?” Izuku asked tentatively. When the boy in question looked up with curiosity in his dark eyes, the shorter boy continued. “D-do you think I s-should have gone w-with everyone? In the f-forest.”

Tenya looked baffled, “Of course not! You were recently injured quite badly and don’t have full use of your arm. It would be illogical to send you into a dangerous training environment with such a handicap.” Tenya’s response was loud enough that several other students heard him and looked over. Izuku flushed at the sudden attention, curling in on himself as multiple sets of turned to look at them.

“Yeah, class rep is right!” Kirishima yelled from across the pool. “Besides, you’ll be joining us for the rest of the training anyway, right? No big deal, Midobro!” Kaminari and Sero nodded, both sending a thumbs up.

Izuku stuttered, trying to articulate that he would *not,* in fact, be doing any training whatsoever by Recovery Girl’s orders, but a loud, “Tch!” from Kaachan stopped him. The explosive blond glared over at him, his red eyes showing his ever present annoyance. He muttered as if he was talking to himself, but Izuku could clearly hear it from across the pool, “Real heroes don’t back down even *if* they’re injured, loser.”

Tenya turned to address Bakugo, his thick eyebrows pulled together in a stern expression, but was interrupted as Mineta shouted, “Everybody shut up! Do you hear that?”

The boys of 1-A silenced immediately, tension clear in their stances as they readied for an attack. They listened carefully to the noises around them, but only heard the chirping of crickets and the sounds of laughter and splashing from across the dividing wall that led to the girls’ side.

Confused, Sero turned to Mineta. “What is it?”

Mineta, who was now nearly salivating at the mouth, mumbled, “The girls are still bathing…” Then, with a burst of speed, he rushed toward where Izuku was sitting by the dividing wall, the water of the bath practically flying behind him with the force of his rush. Everyone, realizing what the single-minded teen was intending, chased after him in an attempt to stop him. Izuku stood from his place at the edge of the pool, trying to gauge where Mineta would exit and waylay him there.

Fervor in his eyes, Mineta flung himself from the water with such force that he sailed straight over Izuku’s head and stuck to the dividing wall with a purple ball in each hand. Izuku flailed as he turned rapidly to grasp at the ankle of the nude teen, but Mineta was already half-way up the wooden wall and out of reach.

“Mineta! Bro! Get down!”

“Quit being a perv, dude!”

“I wish to see only darkness from this moment forth. This image is seared into my retinas.”

Mineta paid no heed to the yelling of his fellow classmates, his sole focus on reaching the top of the wall between the boys’ and girls’ baths. “I’m almost there! I’ll finally get to see Yaoyarozu’s boobs!” All of the boys from 1-A winced at Mineta’s cringey goal as they watched him climb, unable to catch up to him even as they struggled to get out of the pool. Sero attempted to wrap the tiny teen in tape, but the purple teen seemed to gain dexterity with his single-minded focus as he deftly dodged out of the way.

Izuku watched from below, diverting his eyes from Mineta’s exposed backside, but also trying to formulate a plan to get him down. None of the girls would appreciate Mineta’s peeping, and Izuku was sure Aizawa would give them all an earful if Mineta got his way. As Izuku watched helplessly, he saw the spiked hat of Kota as he peered over the top of the dividing wall with a disgusted look on his face. Mineta paused in surprise at seeing the little boy above him. “H-hey! Get out of my way, kid!”

Kota scowled and brought his fist down on the top of Mineta’s head. The purple-haired teen, stunned, fell backward toward the pool. Tenya, who exited the pool to chase after Mineta, was unfortunate enough to be underneath the teen as he fell and got a face full of

Mineta's backside.

"Thanks, Kota!" One of the girls on the other side of the wooden wall called as Tenya hastily threw Mineta back into the pool and rushed to rinse his face in the hot water. Izuku, who was watching as Kaminari and Sero berated Mineta, heard a shriek from above, and glanced up in time to see Kota tumble over the side of the wall and plummet toward the cement below. Instinctually, Izuku dashed forward, his lone arm outstretched to catch the falling child. Without his quirk to propel him into the air and meet Kota mid-fall, Izuku was only able to dive for the kid as he was about to hit the hard ground. His timing was correct, but, without both arms, taking Kota's weight was difficult. The green-haired teen felt Kota's head cushioned in the crook of his elbow, then felt the impact as they both hit the rough ground with force.

Izuku winced, his eyes cracking open as he heard Kirishima and Tenya calling out to him as he stopped sliding against the cement.

"Midobro! You okay?"

"Finely executed, Izuku! Did either of you sustain any injuries?"

Glancing down at the child, Izuku didn't see any scrapes or cuts on Kota. "I-I think he f-fainted," Izuku called back, slowly letting the child's head rest against the concrete as he slid his arm out from under it. He winced again, feeling a sting on his elbow. He glanced down, seeing raw skin from a large, deep scrape along his forearm. It wasn't bleeding badly, so he ignored it as he stood, brushing loose pebbles from his shorts. His knees were also scraped, though not nearly as bad as his arm. Gingerly, Izuku crouched down and lifted Kota to lean against his chest. He stood with his right arm holding the small child's weight as he walked toward the door to the cabin.

"I'm g-going to take h-him to Mandalay."

Tenya nodded, waving as Izuku pushed the door open with his foot and walked inside the cool cabin. He half-jogged towards the lounge area where he thought the Wild Wild Pussycats might be. Entering the large space, he saw Pixie-Bob, Aizawa, Mandalay, and Vlad King sitting around a coffee table in casual clothes with a deck of cards between them. Aizawa leaned back against the soft couch, sipping a cup of tea as he watched the other three play. All four heroes glanced up at Izuku as he coughed, "Um…e-excuse me…"

Aizawa was instantly on his feet, eyes intense and striding right

towards Izuku. “What the hell happened?” He questioned, voice low and serious. Mandalay also stood and rushed over to take Kota from Izuku; she laid him on one of the couches and started checking him over. The teen felt water dripping down his arm and wiped it on his t-shirt subconsciously.

“Problem Child, you’re getting it all over your shirt.” Aizawa pulled Izuku’s arm away from his body and led the teen over to a wooden chair at the edge of the lounge area. Aizawa looked over to Pixie-Bob as Izuku sat down, confused. “Do you have a first aid kit?”

“Of course!” The blonde woman dashed off and disappeared down a hallway Izuku hadn’t yet explored.

“Wh-what’s wrong…?” Izuku’s green eyes watched Aizawa as the man examined his right arm.

“Kid, you’re covered in blood when you were supposed to be relaxing with your class. What do you think is wrong?” He grunted as he gently rotated Izuku’s arm.

“Blood?” Izuku questioned, looking down. He blanched as he realized that the white t-shirt was bright red all down his right side. Blood dripped from his elbow in a slow, but steady rhythm as Aizawa tried to get a good look at the wound. Izuku gulped, realizing just how badly he was bleeding.

“Here you go, Eraser,” Pixie-Bob stopped next to Aizawa and handed him a large red bag with a white cross on the front. The dark-haired hero immediately began pulling out bandages, alcohol wipes, and an antibiotic cream.

“Is it just your elbow?” Aizawa grunted as he wiped the blood dripping down Izuku’s arm with a square towel from the kit. The teen hissed and winced as the towel traveled over the lower part of the scrape, the rough fabric feeling like sandpaper across the exposed skin.

Izuku bit his lip, “My kn-knees too, I think.” Aizawa leaned back in his crouch to look at the scratched up skin. There was some blood, but it appeared to stop bleeding already, so he continued his ministrations on Izuku’s arm and made a mental note to clean the pebbles out of the teen’s knees before they put a bandage over them.

Pressing the towel against the bleeding scrape, Aizawa motioned for Izuku to hold it with his other hand. “Hold that for a second. We need

to get your shirt off or we'll get blood all over your bandages when we're done."

Izuku pressed the towel into his elbow as best he could with the fingers of his left hand as Aizawa unclipped the sling from around his shoulder and helped him shimmy his cast through the clean sleeve. It took far longer than it should have since they had to switch back and forth between who was pressing the towel against his elbow. The bleeding was slowing down, but a significant amount of it still clung to Izuku's side after they removed the rest of his shirt. He blushed heavily as Aizawa used the dry side of his shirt to mop up the remaining blood, feeling exposed without his shirt on in a room full of pro heroes. He curled in on himself, the scratchy surface of his blue cast rough against his skinny chest.

Aizawa warned him, "This is going to hurt," and started dabbing at the raw skin with an alcohol wipe. Izuku grit his teeth and hissed in a sharp breath as the large section of raw skin on his elbow stung harshly. Once he was satisfied that the wound was clean, Aizawa spread a thick cream over the red skin and wrapped gauze and bandages over it. Izuku's face was aflame with embarrassment and pain. His teeth were deep into his lip by the time Aizawa was done with his arm and moved to his knees. His only solace was that Pixie-Bob, Vlad King, and Mandalay were letting Aizawa take the lead with Izuku while they made sure Kota was comfortable.

"Mind telling me how this happened?" Shouta muttered as he carefully flicked pebbles from Izuku's scratched up knees. He looked up into Izuku's green eyes, true concern showing through his serious exterior.

The teen released his red lip from between his teeth, tasting copper. His stutter was even worse due to his embarrassment, "M-Mineta was t-trying t-to…to cli-climb the wa-wall and l-look at the g-girls…"

Shouta shut his eyes for a moment and pinched the bridge of his nose, his jaw clenched. When he opened his eyes again, he returned to cleaning the dirt out of Izuku's knees and sighed. Izuku averted his eyes as Shouta continued to tend to his wounds. The situation reminded him heavily of anytime he fell as a kid and hurt himself, and his mom would sit him down to cover his scrapes with All Might bandaids and kisses. Only this was infinitely more embarrassing because he was old enough to do this himself, he was surrounded by pro heroes, and Shouta was most definitely *not* his mom.

“And that turned into you skinning your arm, how?” The dark-haired man unwrapped another alcohol wipe and got to work. The stinging was more manageable this time, and Izuku was able to continue without wincing. He explained how Kota stopped Mineta and the subsequent dives both of them took off the wall, how he stopped Kota’s head from hitting the cement from a twenty foot drop. Shouta shook his head as he slid his hand to plaster the last bandage on Izuku’s knee. “Can’t leave you alone for a minute,” he grunted. He double checked Izuku for any blood he missed from before, then stood to pack away the first aid supplies.

“S-sorry, sensei…” Izuku mumbled as he wrapped his arm around his middle and he curled in on himself. *I just get myself into trouble. Worthless as a hero, just like Kaachan said.*

Shouta watched Izuku carefully as he strode over the couch and grabbed something on the other side. He frowned at the obvious discomfort in his student and returned to crouch next to him. “Don’t apologize for saving someone, kid. Just try not to give me a heart attack next time.” He gave Izuku a small smile and held out his black hoodie. “Here, you can put this on until you get another shirt.”

Izuku took the hoodie gingerly, eyes silently asking for permission. Aizawa let the fabric slip from his fingers as he turned to gather up the used wipes and packaging from the bandages. The green-haired teen slowly pulled his cast through one of the overlarge sleeves. When he had the jacket on fully, he looked around for his sling and caught sight of the image on the hoodie. It was a washed out silhouette of Present Mic. He smiled despite himself, catching Shouta’s eye as the man winked at him from across the room.

Izuku picked up his sling, sliding it on and attempting to strap it together one-handed. He almost got it clipped in, but his newly bandaged arm prevented him from bending enough to make the two ends meet. Aizawa, seeing his plight, connected it for him as he made another garbage run. He picked up Izuku’s bloody shirt, muttering, “I’ll see if we have any cleaners, but this shirt may be beyond me.”

Izuku nodded silently as the man walked toward his private room. Across the lounge, Vlad, Pixie-Bob, and Mandalay were chatting quietly, all seeming calm as Mandalay gently patted Kota’s black hair. Izuku stood and crept closer, stuttering, “Um…is-is Kota okay? I d-don’t think he h-hit his head, but I-I wasn’t s-sure.”

Mandalay smiled at him, adjusting the damp rag on Kota’s forehead as

she did. “He’s just fine. And thank you for catching him, Midoriya-kun.”

Izuku smiled nervously and bowed, “O-of course!” He waited a moment, long enough for Aizawa to re-enter the room.

“I’m sorry he was so rude to you earlier. He’s had a hard time recently, especially with heroes.” Mandalay looked sadly down at the small boy laying on the couch next to her.

“N-no, it’s f-fine!” Izuku waved a hand to dismiss her concern. He didn’t want to think about what happened earlier that day. Kaachan’s voice interrupted his thoughts. *Breaking down over some tiny kid’s opinions? Tch, what a loser you are deku.* While he felt his own stomach dropping at the words that sounded so much like Kaachan, he also felt the urge to help rising. “S-sorry to ask, but i-is there a r-reason he doesn’t l-like heroes?”

Mandalay and Pixie-Bob smiled sadly. “His parents were my cousins. They were both pro heroes that died fighting a villain a couple years ago. It’s hard for him to understand that they died protecting other people from the same fate. He feels like they left him behind.” Mandalay sighed and gently rubbed some dirt from Kota’s chin.

Izuku’s mind raced. *Two heroes, married, died two years ago. That sounds like—* Izuku watched as Aizawa came to stand behind the couch he was previously sitting on, then turned back to Mandalay. “W-were his parents the W-Water Hose heroes?” Realizing he probably sounded like a creep, Kaachan told him that frequently enough when he was writing volumes one through thirteen of Hero Analysis for the Future, he clapped his hand over his mouth, muttering, “S-sorry…”

Mandalay smiled up at him in surprise, “No, you’re right. They were.” She turned to Aizawa, “You’ve got a perceptive student, Eraser.”

Aizawa nodded, glancing over at Izuku’s embarrassed face before grumbling warmly, “I’m aware.” Pixie-Bob and Mandalay laughed quietly at the bored expression on Aizawa’s face that did not at all match his tone. Straightening his stance, Shouta gestured for Izuku to follow him. “Your class should be finishing up soon. I’ll walk you back.”

Izuku called out, “Y-yes, sensei!” He bowed to the three pro heroes sitting on the couches. “Have a g-good night!” He and Aizawa exited the lounge in the direction of the student sleeping quarters. The two were quiet for most of the walk, and they didn’t come across any of

the other students along the way.

When they reached the large door leading to the boys' cots, Aizawa stopped and turned to fix Izuku with his dark gaze. "Try not to get into any trouble while you're sleeping, Problem Child." He dropped his hands into the pockets of his black jeans and started striding back the way they came.

"A-Aizawa-sensei?" Izuku questioned, pulling up on the edge of the black hoodie that was far too big for him. The dark-haired man turned, an eyebrow raised in question. "Y-you can h-have your jacket back." He started pulling his arm out of his sling and attempting to get the strap off over his fluffy hair.

Shouta shook his head, "It's too chilly to be walking around half-dressed, kid. You can give it back tomorrow morning." Izuku stopped removing the jacket, then nodded. Shouta turned to continue down the hall. He waved a hand, "Get some sleep. Tomorrow will be busy."

Izuku called after him, "G-goodnight!" He entered the large room of cots, noting that dim lights surrounded the perimeter of the room, giving off a soft warm glow. The boys from Class 1-B sat on their chosen cots chatting. They glanced up when Izuku entered, then returned to their conversations. He ran through his nightly routine, brushing his teeth and slowly changing into his pajamas as 1-A came into the room. Tenya waved to him, setting his bag down on a cot next to Izuku's.

"When you didn't come back, I thought something might have been wrong," he explained as he unpacked his toiletries.

"Oh," Izuku scratched his head as he set the sling on top of his backpack. "I uh…I s-started bleeding, so I had to c-clean that up. But e-everything is f-fine! K-Kota just fainted." He smiled at his friend, who seemed relieved.

"I'm glad neither of you were hurt badly from Mineta's indecent behavior. He was thoroughly reprimanded after you left." He unzipped the professional-looking duffle bag at his feet. "Are you looking forward to the training tomorrow?"

Izuku nodded excitedly, "I-I'm not actually allowed t-to train, but I'm e-excited to see wh-what it will be!"

Tenya frowned, "You're not allowed to train?" He laid out a perfectly folded set of light blue pajamas and a pair of slippers on his cot.

“Y-yeah,” Izuku admitted. “Recovery Girl s-said I couldn’t u-until my arm is healed.” Tenya nodded at the explanation, a look of understanding on his face. He excused himself to use the restrooms, and Izuku took the time to look around the room. There was a significant divide between the two classes, at least two lines of cots, but otherwise there was no order to the layout. Kirishima and Bakugo were next to each other, though the latter appeared annoyed by this; Kaminari, Sero, and Mineta were chatting to each other from their sleeping bags; Todoroki was separate from everyone else by his own design; Koda and Ojiro weren’t far from Izuku and Tenya’s cots; and Shoji, Aoyama, and Sato were centered around what looked like a nest where Izuku assumed Tokoyami was sleeping.

After Tenya returned, Tiger from the Wild Wild Pussycats poked his head into the large room. “Lights out in five!” He called, his gloved hand waving to make sure everyone heard him. The boys from both classes started to slip into their sleeping bags and settle in, though there was still chatter throughout the room. Izuku hesitated at the edge of his cot. He glanced at the folded black hoodie next to his backpack. Before he could rethink his decision, he pulled it on over his pajama top and crawled into his own green sleeping bag. He wished Tenya a goodnight as the lights dimmed to darkness, and the only light was the one coming in from under the door. Soon, that too went out.

Izuku curled up into a ball, the outside layer of his sleeping bag slipping easily against the fabric of the cot. His face snuggled into the soft pillow as he slowly relaxed into a more restful state, the hoodie warming him against the chill air of the cabin. As the chatter died down, Izuku let himself be lulled to sleep by thoughts of a quiet afternoon playing with Tofu, surrounded by the comforting smell of Shouta and Hizashi’s apartment. *It’s only temporary* , he reminded himself, *but it’s still nice.*

Chapter End Notes

> Woohoo! I finally got this posted! Life and surprise work trips to the middle of nowhere really put a damper on writing consistently haha :)
>
> This chapter is huge, and I love it! Hope you all enjoy having more to chew on this week. I did have to write this while on a work trip, so I can’t say the editing will be any good. iPads are a little difficult to do a lot of editing on. Great for typing on the airplane though!

In other news, I created a discord server for this fic and any future fics I do. I'm not sure if there's really any interest in it, but it's there if you want! Here's the link: https://discord.gg/6vfCJQ88et
Let me know if the link doesn't work or if you can't access anything. I tried to make it a little bot-proof, but I'm the only one in it right now so it's hard to troubleshoot.

See you next chapter!

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku woke before the rest of the students of the first year hero course. He lay in his cot for several minutes just listening to the quiet chirping of birds from outside the cabin. A few of his classmates turned in their sleep, but otherwise it was silent inside the large room. The air was crisp with a morning chill that nipped at Izuku's exposed nose and cheeks, but inside his sleeping bag and hoodie he was comfortably warm. He shifted slightly to dislodge his cast from digging into his ribs as he blinked sleepily at the morning light creeping through the windows.

When he could no longer ignore the urgency of his bladder, he slowly crawled out of his green sleeping bag and stood. The wooden floors were cold against his feet, and he hastily hobbled to the bathrooms at the other end of the room. As he passed Tenya's sleeping form, he had to suppress laughter. The typically perfect hair of the Engine Quirk user was sticking up in all different directions and was completely flat on one side. Izuku was tempted to take a picture to show Ochaco, but his bladder lurched uncomfortably and sent him scampering to relieve himself.

Once his business was finished, he washed his hands in warm water piped in from the hot springs. He glanced at himself in the mirror. The hoodie Shouta let him borrow was very large on him, dropping nearly to his knees and the sleeves had to be scrunched up two times for his hands to pop out of the end. But he was comfortable and more relaxed than he'd been in several weeks. He couldn't quite put his finger on why, and that set his mind racing.

*I'm back with my friends after not seeing them for a week, but even before the exams I felt tense. Could be that it's quiet? Out in nature? Back to training regularly? I'm eating three meals a day again, which is helping me feel normal I guess…*

Izuku pulled the end of the hoodie up so he could see his skinny chest. His ribs weren't sticking out nearly as sharp as they were before the exams, and his hip bones seemed more like small hills along the line of his skin rather than sharp mountain peaks like before. He flicked a bit of dried, brown blood from his side. Evidently, Shouta missed a

spot last night. *I probably should have asked to use the baths before going to bed, there might be blood on my pajamas now.*

"Why the hell would there be blood on your pajamas, nerd?"

Izuku jumped and hastily shoved his shirt and hoodie down to cover his exposed midriff, feeling a twinge in his scraped arm at the fast movement. He swung around to face the voice, which he instantly recognized as Kaachan. The blond glared at him with a grumpy, sleepy expression, but his red eyes glinted with hidden irritation. He leaned against the door jamb with goosebump-covered arms crossed in front of his chest, his loose tank top doing little to ward away the morning chill.

"Oh! Uh…n-no reason, K-Kaachan!" Izuku smiled nervously as he finished drying his hands and made to move past the explosive blond. Bakugo didn't move out of the way for Izuku, instead bracing his arm across the opening and blocking the shorter teen from moving past. Izuku stopped, his green eyes widening apprehensively at the obvious display of Kaachan's dominating personality.

Red eyes glared down at Izuku, irritation growing as the green-haired teen continued to shuffle from foot to foot nervously in front of him. Grunting, he said, "The old hag tried to call your mom last week, and it said her number wasn't in service."

Izuku fiddled with the end of the overly-long sleeve of Shouta's hoodie, hoping this conversation wasn't going where he thought it was. "S-she l-lost her ph-phone and h-hasn't bought a n-new one y-yet."

Bakugo narrowed his eyes at Izuku. He stood in the doorway for several long seconds as he searched the shorter teen's face for… *something.* Izuku couldn't tell. Finally, the explosive boy huffed and pushed past Izuku roughly. "Tell Auntie Inko to text my old lady when she gets a new phone. The hag was getting worried or some shit."

Izuku mumbled a nervous, "S-sure!" He scampered back into the large room, smiling tensely at Kirishima as the red-head rubbed at his sleep-filled eyes and crawled out of his sleeping bag with a grunted greeting on his lips. Izuku hurried to his cot, stripping out of his pajamas and into his day clothes. Tenya grunted in his sleep and rolled over. Izuku quietly pulled the zipper on his duffle bag closed so as not to wake the tousle-haired boy. Folding Shouta's hoodie reverently with the Present Mic decal on top, Izuku slipped his arm into the sling and set a

notebook and pen on his cot.

Few of his classmates were awake, only Bakugo, Kirishima, and a boy with a literal speech bubble above his head. The blond boy eyed Izuku from his cot as the thin teen slipped quietly to the door, his red eyes narrowed as if he was trying to solve a puzzle. Izuku slid through the door quickly, trying to ignore his rising heart rate or the pain in his bottom lip from where his teeth were sunk deeply into it. *Kaachan is just making sure mom's alright. He doesn't know. He didn't find out.* Izuku didn't delve into *what* exactly Kaachan didn't know. Afterall, why would he need to keep secrets if mom was coming back home in a couple weeks?

Shaking the thought from his head, the green-eyed teen, dressed in shorts and a dark t-shirt, pushed open the wooden door leading to the outside kitchen. A stiff breeze blew into the temperate cabin, causing Izuku to scrunch his arms close as goosebumps rose on his arms. He hurried to set his notebook down on one of the sun bleached tables next to the unlit fires, rubbing his exposed skin as best he could with one hand trapped in the rough cast. He glanced around with hopeful eyes looking for Shouta, but saw no one. The sun peeked over the tops of the wind-blown trees as Izuku stood shivering in the morning chill.

*It's so cold!* He looked around for a sunny spot to stand in, but the cooking area was still in shadow. His gaze landed on the Present Mic decal on the black hoodie. *Shouta won't mind if I wear his hoodie while I make breakfast, right? I'll give it back as soon as I see him. And no one is around to see me…*

Izuku pulled off the sling holding his injured arm and pulled the hoodie over his head. Instantly, he was comfortably warm without the wind blowing on his exposed skin. He tucked his poofy curls under the hood, only the front of his hair sticking out, and moved into the kitchen to see what ingredients he could use for his breakfast. He found a few large bags of rice and several cartons of eggs in the refrigerators inside the cabin. He quickly set about making his simple breakfast, wishing he could find where the Pussycats kept their sesame seeds and seasonings. His rice would be fairly bland without it, but he shook that thought off. He managed to eat plain rice and vegetables for nearly a month before. A couple days of unseasoned rice and eggs for breakfast wouldn't kill him. While the rice cooked, he started filling out his notebook.

*'Ashido Mina. Quirk: Acid. Slings acid from her extremities and has resistance to all acids. Also has pink skin and hair, and prominent horns*

*that protrude from her head. Physical appearance appears to be additional mutations due to the acid quirk. Potential for a chemical in her skin that turns it pink and provides acid resistance? Some sort of chemical base? Requires further research.*

*Ashido is more suited to limelight or twilight heroics, as she would be too easy to recognize on the street to be an underground hero. Her distinctive horns and skin tone would be dead giveaways and likely cause criminals and villains to target her during non-patrol hours…'*

And on he continued, muttering quietly to himself until the rice was finished. He served it into a bowl slowly, trying not to drop any of the white rice on the ground and also not lose his tenuous grip on the dish. Once the bowl was full, he set it on the table he and his friends sat at last night and cracked an egg into it. Without the regular spices and seasonings mixed in, the breakfast looked rather unappetizing, but Izuku knew better than to complain. *My stomach doesn't ache all day anymore, and I'm sure I can make something better for lunch anyway when everyone else is around to help cook.*

Izuku ate his breakfast at a sedated pace to ensure the raw egg wasn't going to disagree with him. In between each bite, he continued his analysis of Ashido and her quirk.

*Depending on the interaction between Ashido's acid and Endeavor's flames, there could be two outcomes. If the acid is somehow flammable, Ashido would likely lose to Endeavor as her acid would never touch him. If she is able to find a way to surprise Endeavor with possibly causing an explosion of acid-flames, however, there's a slim chance she would succeed due to Endeavor's passive fire resistance and his comfort around large amounts of fire.*

*On the other hand, if her acid douses the flames, she has a much better chance of beating Endeavor. Her main problem would be avoiding Endeavor's high temperature attacks like Prominence Burn or Flashfire Fist. If she could somehow coat herself in her acid to protect herself from these attacks, she should be able to get several hits in. Endeavor's quirk protects him from burning due to flames, but acid burns are completely different.*

*Against Fat Gum…*

A quiet cough came from behind him, and Izuku turned to see Aizawa watching him with tired eyes and a mug of what smelled like his usual dark coffee roast. His other hand was deep in his pocket, and Izuku's All Might hoodie was draped over his arm. In a scratchy voice that

Izuku associated with the time he and Aizawa first watched Ironman, he grunted, “You’re up early.”

Taking the greeting as it was intended rather than how it sounded, Izuku smiled and nodded, “Good morning, Aizawa-sensei.”

Shouta gave a tired smile in reply and held out Izuku’s hoodie. “You left this in the changing room.” Izuku took it with quiet thanks, noting that Shouta’s hair was slightly damp, and started removing the black hoodie. The man stopped him as he struggled with his sling, “Give it back to me later. It’s chilly out, anyway.”

Izuku objected, “B-but aren’t you cold t-too?” Shouta shook his head and lifted his coffee mug in a kind of salute as he took a sip. The dark-haired man sighed in satisfaction and sat down next to Izuku. The smell of coffee intensified. It was the same stuff Shouta brewed at the apartment: some sort of dark brew with a hint of hazelnut and caramel. Izuku thought it reflected the personality of the man drinking it quite well. They sat quietly for several minutes; Shouta sipped his coffee and Izuku jotted down additional notes on his classmates.

When the caffeine appeared to finally hit Shouta’s system, he turned to Izuku, asking, “How’s your arm from last night?”

Izuku set his pen down and awkwardly rolled up the extremely long sleeve of his borrowed hoodie. He couldn’t get a good look at the bottom of his elbow, so instead he turned to present the bandage to Shouta. The man’s dark eyes roved over his elbow, then he nodded, grunting, “Come get me when we break for lunch. I can change the bandage then.”

“Okay,” Izuku muttered. Then, reminded of the events of last night, asked, “Is K-Kota alright?”

Shouta nodded, his voice low and scratchy. “He’s fine. Saw the girls over the wall and it startled him enough he fainted.” Shouta chuckled dryly, shaking his head and rubbing his eyes. “Poor kid caught an eyeful.”

Izuku flushed in secondhand embarrassment, mumbling, “I-I’m glad he’s okay though…”

Shouta hummed in agreement. He watched the top of the trees as the morning breeze blew a cool air into the encampment. The main door to the cabin opened and Vlad King exited, followed by Mandalay and Kota. Shouta sighed heavily as he rubbed his face and made to stand.

Addressing Izuku, he said, “I’ll be teaching the remedial students until eight o’clock. I’ll come find you after, and we can talk.”

Izuku nodded, biting his lip as he did. He was nervous to speak about everything they were discussing the day before, but hopeful. He couldn’t deny that Shouta’s presence and calming words were comforting despite all the anxiety that came with the topic. Shouta gave a small smile and ruffled Izuku’s hair before walking to join Vlad King and the rest of the Pussycats who exited the cabin. “Enjoy your morning, kid.”

Izuku returned the sentiment, then went back to filling in his notebook. Not long after Shouta left, Ochaco sat across the table from him with a slight frown between her thin eyebrows. She turned to watch Aizawa-sensei talking with Vlad King as Izuku greeted her.

“Good morning, De—I mean, Izuku!” She replied, still watching Aizawa-sensei. She turned to face the green-haired teen with a strange smile and a hand fidgeting with the end of her long bangs. She looked away from Izuku again.

Izuku frowned, asking, “I-is everything o-okay?”

“Huh?” Ochaco jumped, eyes wild. Izuku frowned and repeated the question. “Oh!” She cried, “Um, yeah everything’s okay! Um…” She paused for a moment but looked as if something was ready to burst out of her. She looked straight into Izuku’s green eyes, her expression nervous and embarrassed. Finally, she blurted, “Why was Aizawa-sensei ruffling your hair?!”

Izuku flushed red beneath his freckled cheeks. He set down his pen and turned his gaze away from his friend. He stuttered, “I…um…he—“

Ochaco, no longer able to contain herself, continued, “I mean, I don’t think I’ve ever seen him be so familiar with anyone in our class! He’s always so stern! What was he saying to you? I swore I saw him smiling!”

Izuku leaned back with the weight of the rapid-fire questions, his eyes blowing wide at Ochaco’s exuberance. “Um…h-he was j-just checking on m-me!”

“But why did he ruffle your hair? That’s so odd…” She considered Izuku for a moment, her eyebrows pulled together. “Wait, do you know Aizawa-sensei outside of school or something? I remember you

recognized him on our first day!"

Izuku backpedaled, his hand coming up in front of his chest as if to ward away the assumptions she was making. "I-I just recognized him a-as E-Eraserhead! That's a-all! I n-never met him b-before then!" He felt himself devolving into a stream of mutters and stumbling over his words as he tried to convince his friend of something he knew was completely false. "I-I don't know Aizawa-sensei as anything o-other than our t-teacher! I mean, that w-would be p-pretty weird, right? H-he just v-visited me in the h-hospital a f-few times a-and w-wanted to m-make sure I was o-okay! Th-that's all! Haha! It's n-not like he's m-my g-guardian or—" Izuku cut himself off quickly, his hand coming up to slap over his mouth. *I hope she didn't notice that last part!* He dropped his hand into his lap and tried to laugh to cover his mistake. It sounded forced and very fake to his own ears. *Don't notice don't notice PLEASE don't notice!*

Ochaco tilted her head to the side, eyes curious. "Guardian? Why would he be your guardian?"

"He's not!" Izuku blurted, his voice high and loud. He coughed heavily, then continued, "T-that would b-be ridiculous, r-right?"

Brown eyes changed from concerned to laughing instantly, "A little, haha! But you said he visited you at the hospital? Why did he do that?"

Izuku relaxed when his mistake was glossed over. He watched several of his classmates walk past to start fires going in the kitchen as he replied, "Um, y-yeah! Aizawa-sensei and Recovery Girl wanted to m-make sure I was okay to g-go on the camp. My m-mom had to work a lot while I-I was there, so it w-was kinda…nice to um…have v-visitors..." He finished lamely, looking down to push up his long sleeves unnecessarily. It felt strange to admit Shouta saw him outside of class, like it was a taboo. *He has a reputation as the meanest teacher at UA. Ashido thought he lived in a bat cave!*

"Oh, okay!" Ochaco smiled. "I would have come to visit too, but no one knew where they took you! We just heard you had to go into surgery, and then Tenya heard from Yamada-sensei that you were alright and to tell the rest of the class. I was really worried for you!"

Izuku flushed, feeling a warmth in his chest. He was glad his friends cared about him, even if he didn't feel as if he deserved it. If they knew him in middle school, Izuku was sure they wouldn't want

anything to do with him. *All Might's quirk helped me in more ways than he knows.*

"M-my phone died, so I couldn't text you. S-sorry!" Izuku shrugged, picking up his pen again as Ochaco smiled back.

"I'm just glad you're okay, De—Izuku! It was scary seeing you get so hurt…" Ochaco looked down and blushed. Izuku didn't know what to say, just nodding and falling silent. Several members of Class 1-B passed by and the smell of cooking filled the air. Shaking herself from her thoughts, Ochaco smiled up at Izuku shyly. "So, ready for training? I bet it's going to be tough if yesterday was anything to go by!"

"Um, yeah!" Izuku agreed, his excitement growing, "It should be really i-interesting. I'm excited to see w-what everyone will be doing for their training! I saw Kaminari's p-plan, and Aizawa-sensei had some really intense stuff in there! I bet everyone else's are the same!" His notebook forgotten in his interest in the training Classes 1-A and 1-B were about to embark in, he started gesticulating with his free hand as he grew more animated. "It's all about quirk t-training instead of battle training this time. Everyone really gets to go all out here!"

Ochaco, who seemed just as excited as Izuku, paused during his speech. She frowned, "How did you see Kaminari's training plan?"

Izuku's eyes went wide as he realized his second mistake of the morning. He clamped a hand over his mouth in horror and squeaked, "I-I wasn't supposed to say that!"

"No," a low voice said behind him. "You weren't." Izuku immediately felt a chill down the back of his neck as he turned to face Shouta with an innocently wide smile. It was far more strained than he intended. The man's expression was carefully blank like it always was in class, but Izuku, now more familiar with his moods, could see a spark of humor hidden in his dark eyes. He hoped he wasn't in major trouble with his guardian.

Ochaco looked between Aizawa and Izuku, her face ashen and her brown eyes commiserating with her fellow classmate as they both prepared for whatever unusual punishment Aizawa-sensei was about to inflict on the poor greenette.

Aizawa's dark eyes turned from Izuku to Ochaco. "Uraraka, go wait by the other ladies." He gestured to where Asui, Ashido, and Yaoyarozu were standing by the wall of the cabin looking curiously at them.

“Oh, um. Yes, Aizawa-sensei!” Ochaco stood from her place at the picnic table, giving Izuku a tense smile that seemed to convey an apology as she scampered off to join the other girls of Class 1-A. Izuku noted she moved rather quickly, like she was getting out of the way of impending doom. He couldn’t bring himself to judge her for it.

Izuku looked up at Aizawa hesitantly as the man towered above him with an eyebrow raised. “A-Am I in trouble?” He asked, half-serious, half-hoping that the spark of humor in Shouta’s eye was directed at him and not someone else.

“Absolutely,” Shouta grunted, his voice laced with his own special brand of sarcasm. “Your punishment is making sure Iida doesn’t micromanage the whole kitchen.” The pro hero turned with a wink and strode calmly towards where Ochaco stood with the other ladies. Along the way, he walked past Mineta and caught hold of the teen’s ear faster than one of All Might’s punches. The purple teen complained the whole time as he was half-dragged to stand in front of Yaoyarozu, Ashido, Asui, Ochaco, Jiro, and Hagakure.

Izuku watched as Mineta’s expression turned from angry to stubborn and embarrassed as all six girls glared at him. He couldn’t hear what was being said, but he had an inkling as to the topic if last night was anything to go by. Turning away from Ochaco after reassuring himself she wasn’t in trouble, Izuku searched the kitchen for Tenya.

The blue-haired boy was nose-to-nose with Kaachan, and the two were glaring daggers at each other. Over the general hubbub, Izuku could hear them arguing.

“We need to keep everything orderly so the whole class gets food!” Tenya sighed, exasperated.

“Get out of my face, loser! I cook how I want!” Bakugo snarled, pushing himself into the taller boy’s space.

Not backing down, Tenya retorted, “Whatever messes you make, we have to clean up! It’s best and most efficient to keep a tidy workspace!”

Feeling the argument was about to devolve into a fistfight—started by Kaachan, most likely—Izuku stepped up next to the Engine Quirk user. “H-hey, Tenya? I c-could use some help w-with the dishes. I c-can’t get my cast w-wet. C-Can you wash, a-and I’ll dry?”

Momentarily distracted, Tenya turned to address Izuku, but the green-

haired teen tugged on his sleeve sharply and led him away from the brewing storm that was Kaachan. The tall boy initially protested, but, upon seeing the mountain of dishes filling the sinks, immediately set about organizing everything into neat piles to be washed. They were joined shortly by a couple of  Class 1-B's students and the ever-growing stacks slowly diminished as breakfast finished cooking.

Tenya and Ochaco grabbed plates and sat next to Izuku. They both had a bowl of steamed rice with grilled fish and vegetables, all topped with a savory sauce that made Izuku's mouth water. He wanted to try it so badly, but had to keep reminding himself that it would only make a reappearance later. Heavy spices and fish were still too much for his stomach to handle.

The trio chatted amiably while the two classes ate breakfast. Ochaco didn't mention anything about the training plans that Izuku let slip earlier, which he was immensely grateful for. Shouta may have been teasing him earlier—which felt…odd, but nice? Izuku wasn't sure—but he was sure his teacher didn't actually want him spilling the beans to the whole class before training started. Izuku made a mental note to never mention the class competition Vlad King mentioned.

Aizawa gathered Class 1-A together, as did Vlad King with Class 1-B. The Wild Wild Pussycats stood behind the two pro teachers with smiles on their faces. Kota, Izuku noticed, stood at the heels of Mandalay and glared out at everyone. When their eyes met, Kota flushed and ducked behind Mandalay's legs to hide his face.

"Alright, listen up," Aizawa grunted, his voice barely audible across the group of students. Each one leaned in to hear better except Jiro and Shoji. Hands in his pockets and signature bored look across his face, the Erasure Hero addressed them. "Until now, your training has been primarily targeted toward technique, strategy, and maintaining a cool head under pressure. Bakugo," the pro hero gestured to the blond teen, who stepped forward. Aizawa handed him a baseball and pulled out his phone. "Throw the ball with your quirk."

Bakugo grinned and wound up his throw. He shot his arm forward with a loud, "HA!" and sent the ball flying with an explosive BAM! from his quirk. Everyone cheered as they watched the numbers on Aizawa's phone fly up until they stopped at 709.6 meters. The class all turned to look at each other with confused expressions while Bakugo glared at the number. "What the hell! No way it's less than the first of the year!"

Izuku stood stock still, not hearing Aizawa's reply as he felt his chest clench tightly, his breathing  labored. He couldn't get enough oxygen. He breathed faster to compensate as he saw his vision closing down to a pin-prick of verdant green leaves just past Bakugo's head. His right hand clawed at the cargo pocket of his shorts. He felt, more than heard, as the thread securing the top flap to the main piece of fabric popped and ripped.

*Ha! You're so useless, deku! What kind of hero doesn't have a quirk? Villains would stamp you into dust!*

*Honey, heroes need quirks to fight villains. I just think you should consider being something else when you're older! Like a teacher, or an accountant? Something you can handle.*

"Izuku?"

"Hey, Midoriya! You okay?"

A solid, but gentle, pat to his back brought Izuku back to his senses as he took several large, deep breaths using the counting technique Shouta used with him before. His vision cleared almost immediately and he glanced around to get his bearings. Most of the class was dispersed across the clearing. Kirishima and Ochaco stood by him looking concerned, while Aizawa turned to gaze curiously at the three. Upon seeing Izuku's expression, the pro hero immediately strode forward. "Kirishima, Uraraka, get started on your training."

Izuku locked eyes with Shouta as he continued counting his breaths. *In for one…two…three…* Both of his classmates protested at the same time.

"But he's so pale, sensei!"

"Midobro was gonna fall over!"

"He'll be fine," Aizawa grunted, using his thumb to point behind him with a serious expression. "Get to it."

Izuku gave Kirishima and Ochaco a strained smile to reassure them, which didn't seem satisfactory to either teen, but they did slowly start walking to their assigned locations. Ragdoll and Tiger called out to them and hurried them into their training areas. Aizawa waited for a moment before turning back to Izuku and leaning down slightly to be on eye level with him. The teen stuttered, "S-sorry…" His voice was weak as he continued to steady his breathing. It was more difficult

than when Shouta counted for him, but he was trying. *I can do this. It's just breathing exercises. You've done harder before now!*

"I've said it before, you don't have to apologize for this, Problem Child." Aizawa gazed earnestly into Izuku's eyes until the teen nodded, then checked Izuku's hand for scratches. Finding none, he nodded. "You didn't hurt yourself this time. That's good. Though," he trailed off, eyes finding the flap over Izuku's pocket that was hanging on by only a quarter of the threads, "Hizashi will want to take you shopping again, and that's a different kind of torture."

Izuku let out a strained laugh, still gasping slightly as he continued counting under his breath. *Out for one…two…* "I-I'll take sh-shopping…over more…b-bandaids…" He managed over his heaving chest.

Shouta smirked, "Then Hizashi has just found a new shopping partner. I'll be at home with the cat."

Izuku shook his head, unsure where this casual confidence was stemming from. "Y-you have to…come t-too. Tofu…Tofu needs h-her alone time." His green eyes watched Shouta's, hoping he wasn't overstepping a boundary.

The dark-haired man snorted and stood straight again, humor deep in his eyes and a slight smile curling his usually straight lips. "That cat has you wrapped around her paw, and I can't even be mad about it."

Izuku smiled tentatively, nodding. They stood in comfortable silence for several moments while he continued his breathing mantra. Finally, he felt the last of his panic fade away, and his shoulders dropped as he sighed. Shouta watched him carefully. "You calmed yourself down this time. That's good progress, kid."

"T-Thanks," Izuku stuttered, feeling unsure. "I-I just tried to d-do the c-counting? L-like you did."

Shouta nodded, looking pleased. "That's exactly what I want you to do. Anytime you start feeling anxious or like you can't breathe. I'll teach you some other methods as well, in the event that one doesn't work."

Izuku nodded, fiddling with his ripped pocket. Now that he was feeling stable again, a rush of embarrassment flooded through him. *I ripped my nice new clothes! I'll have to pay Hizashi back since I ruined these ones…*

Shouta glanced around at the array of scattered students. Several loud noises were coming from the cliff not far from the cabin, and near the edge of the treeline, Bakugo was glaring at a steaming bucket of water as he set off his quirk over and over again. Not far from them, Uraraka was slowly turning green as she floated herself several inches above the ground.

Turning back to Izuku, Shouta asked quietly, “Can you tell me what started this one?”

The teen dropped his gaze, feeling shame creep across him. *I’m such a baby. It’s just Kaachan’s quirk! I’ve been hearing explosions since he got it!* Izuku tried to speak, but found the words wouldn’t come out. He opened his mouth several times to verbalize his thoughts, but only half-formed croaks exited. Sighing heavily and very frustrated, Izuku shook his head, glancing at Kaachan around Shouta’s shoulder.

The pro hero, ever observant, noticed the glance immediately and turned to look at the explosive teen. “Bakugo?” He asked, eyes trained on Izuku’s face.

Izuku felt the dam holding his words back break, and he began spewing rapidly, “I-I don’t know w-why it started! I’ve b-been around K-Kaachan since we were k-kids! I s-should be used to his q-quirk by now and h-how loud it i-is. He u-used it all the time! I-I’m just being a b-baby, s-so you don’t have to w-worry about it, Aizawa-sensei.” Izuku trailed off, hoping the man would just drop the subject and the teen could bury himself in his analysis homework.

Shouta quirked an eyebrow and slid his hands into his pockets. He stood in a relaxed stance, not wanting Izuku to feel ill-at-ease while they discussed what sounded like a potential trigger for the teen. “Panic attacks don’t have to make sense, and it doesn’t matter how familiar the sound of Bakugo’s quirk *should be* to you. If it makes you feel unsafe, we need to avoid it.”

Izuku protested, “I-I feel safe! It’s just…” He trailed off, not sure what he was trying to say. *I’m fine. This is just me being ridiculous and weak, like Kaachan said.*

“Izuku,” Shouta grunted, a gentle expression on his face. “Panic attacks are characterized by either acute fear or anxiety. Oftentimes both. Neither of those emotions are generally paired with feeling safe.” Izuku slumped, all the bravado fading out of him. He bit his lip. Shouta leaned down to be at eye-level again and placed a hand on

Izuku's shoulder. "Remember what I said about triggers? I think this might be one for you. And now that I know that, I'm going to make a change to your assignment, alright?"

Izuku looked up curiously, wondering what the analysis homework had to do with triggers. Shouta continued, "I don't want you to do an analysis on Bakugo. Pick one of the students from Class 1-B to analyze instead. I'm going to move Bakugo to a new spot so you don't have to hear his quirk while you're talking to your other classmates."

"B-But, you dont have to do that! It's too m-much! Y-you don't have to move K-Kaachan! A-and I can still do the-the analysis—" Izuku protested. *I don't need special treatment! I'm just being stupid about it! Dekus like me are too sensitive!*

"No." Aizawa stated flatly, shaking his head. "There's absolutely no reason why I would put you in a situation where you felt afraid or anxious. Especially while I'm supposed to be teaching you. That's counter to my job as a teacher and a pro hero. We may be away from UA, but this is still a school event, and everyone, including *you* ," he punctuated the word by pinning the teen with his serious dark eyes, "should feel safe. So, no Bakugo. Pick anyone from Vlad's class instead."

Izuku bit his lip, then nodded. "Okay…" he mumbled. He was glad, if he was being honest with himself. The way Kaachan had been looking at him since the trip started had him on edge, and the blond's questions about his mom were too close to things he'd rather not talk about to be comfortable.

"Alright," Shouta sighed, straightening and gazing out at his students, then turning back to Izuku once more, his expression soft. "Better get your notebook then, Problem Child."

Chapter End Notes

Welcome back to another installment of What-Horrible-Thing-Can-I-Do-To-Izuku! This episode is, oddly enough, not nearly as bad as I thought it would be! But just you wait...mwahahaha!

Hope you're all having a fantastic weekend and we'll see you next time! Thanks for all the comments and kudos! You guys are seriously awesome and it makes me so excited to see your thoughts on the story. :D :D :D

This story now has a discord server! Come join us to hang out,

chat about this story, and post pictures of our cute pets! Link: https://discord.gg/c2gTtJUGy9

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku sighed happily as he sat down to dinner with an exhausted Tenya and Ochaco by his side. He had a bowl of lightly seasoned curry in front of him while the rest of the first year heroics students meandered through the line to get their dinners. Ochaco slumped forward, her head thumping down onto her folded arms as she groaned, “I don’t think I can eat. I’m so nauseous!”

With far less gusto than he usually spoke with, Tenya replied, “We’ve expended a lot of energy today training. To not eat would be a disservice to the hard work you’ve put in.” He wiped his sweaty brow and tugged his sweat-darkened gym shirt away from his chest to allow air against his skin. His tired black eyes gazed longingly at the line of students filling their bowls.

“Come along, we need sustenance.” Tenya heaved himself up, his legs trembling as he put his weight on them once again. Ochaco groaned again, then stood and wobbled into line behind Tenya.

Izuku smiled to himself while he carefully ate the hot vegetables. His notebook, which was pristine this morning, was half-crinkled, half-perfect. He managed to talk to five of his classmates today about their quirks, and in his downtime, he scribbled down answers to the other questions Aizawa-sensei assigned him. By far, his favorite student to observe today had been Tokoyami and Dark Shadow. He had several pages of curious musings about whether Dark Shadow was sentient and what that could mean for Tokoyami as a hero. Would they be considered a duo? Or one hero with two minds? The possibilities ran around Izuku’s head all morning.

And then there was Yaoyarozu. The ability to create *anything* so long as she had the chemical makeup memorized was incredible! Izuku spent nearly an hour asking her about the variety of objects she could create and what toll it took on her body. Did she need to eat more after making a blanket versus making a cannon? Did she find certain foods more beneficial to her quirk? When deciding who would win in the pro hero matchups, Izuku made a note that Yaoyarozu would benefit from studying under Fat Gum, but that their match would ultimately be decided on who had more body fat stored.

For Asui, he focused on learning how her quirk altered her physically, as she was one of the few true mutation quirks in the class. Her true power depended on the environment. Overly cold or hot temperatures put her in dangerous situations, which meant Endeavor was an incredibly bad matchup for her. However, if she were fighting him in a lake, river, or ocean environment, she stood a much better chance.

For Kaminari and Mineta, support gear was the name of the game. Kaminari's charged attacks were powerful, but without the ability to direct the attacks they were easy to overcome. Mineta could easily overtake an opponent if he could get them stuck with the purple balls on his head, but once that was known, it was also easy to avoid. Both hero students would need supporting items to give them more options in a fight.

*Tomorrow, I'll talk to Ochaco, Tenya, Ashido, Jiro, and Sato if I can. I should be able to get through the entire class by the end of the week at this rate! Then I can refine my notes to better answer everything Aizawa-sensei asked for. I still need to choose a student from Class 1-B though…Maybe Monoma or Kendo? Monoma has a very unique quirk, but Kendo has a transformation quirk like Kirishima's. I haven't studied very many of either, so they're both good options. And I've always wanted to figure out how copy quirks work in practical use—*

The clinking of bowls against the wooden picnic table brought Izuku out of his thoughts. Ochaco sat gingerly on the bench, her face a little queasy as she gazed at her dinner. Tenya attempted to sit with grace, but his legs failed him on the way down and he landed on the bench with a *thump!* Izuku smiled at them both. "S-so how was training?"

Ochaco shook her head, a pained expression on her face as she brought a bite of rice up to her mouth. She stared at the food with a strange expression on her round face before slowly eating it. Tenya, who was digging into his dinner with as much enthusiasm as the tired boy could manage, replied, "Quite exhausting! But I believe Aizawa-sensei when he says this will benefit our quirks! I will be interested to see our quirk assessment scores at the end of this camp."

"What were you doing? I d-don't think I saw you the entire day." Izuku watched his friend curiously as he ate his own dinner. The small amounts of meat mixed in with the vegetables were sitting well in his stomach, and he was incredibly grateful for that. Throwing up on this camp was something he hoped to avoid at all costs, especially since Shouta wanted to know if it happened, and he didn't want to explain *that* to his friends.

“I have been running continuously all day, with stops only to rehydrate and eat lunch!” Tenya said proudly, standing incredibly straight to add his own brand of emphasis. Izuku hid a laugh in his bowl as he saw how much the tall boy’s legs trembled.

Ochaco lifted her face to watch Tenya as he dropped back onto the bench. She grimaced, “I had to float myself off the ground all day. And when I wasn’t doing that, Pixie-Bob made giant rocks for me to lift up instead. I’m so tired…” She closed her brown eyes temporarily, then blinked them open to stare into her bowl again.

“S-sounds like you’re improving though,” Izuku encouraged with a bright smile. “I remember making yourself weightless for a long time was hard for you before.”

Ochaco considered his words, then nodded, a small smile creeping across her open face. “Yeah…I suppose you’re right, Izuku! Just wish I didn’t have to feel so sick afterwards though…” She slowly brought another bite of food to her mouth and ate it. The three continued chatting about the camp happily while they finished their meals. Tenya went back for seconds and thirds before he was satisfied. Izuku was overly full after just the first bowl, and Ochaco could hardly finish her meal.

After the dishes were cleaned and everything put away, Aizawa and Vlad announced the bathing schedules, which matched last nights, and called for the students who didn’t pass the practical to follow them for their remedial courses. Kaminari, Sato, Sero, and Ashido groaned and stood while Kirishima grinned. From Class 1-B, Izuku saw only Monoma stand from the picnic tables and follow their teachers.

Once the teachers were inside, the remaining students chatted amiably, some suggesting night games or pulling out packs of cards to entertain themselves. Izuku was about to follow Tenya and Ochaco inside to grab their jackets so they could sit by a campfire and chat when he spotted Kota’s spiked hat disappearing through the crowd of students. He watched the young child leave the main camp and strike out on a dirt trail leading into the forest. Izuku turned to see if Mandalay or any of the Pussycats were following him. They were busy making their own dinner and hadn’t noticed Kota wandering off.

Worry for the six-year-old gnawed at Izuku’s stomach. *I didn’t see him eat anything, and he’s going off on his own?* He quickly excused himself from his friends with a rushed, “I-I’ll be back in a bit. I f-forgot I needed to do something!” He hurried over to the four Pussycats who

were settling on their own table to eat.

Four sets of eyes turned to Izuku as he coughed, “Excuse me, M-Mandalay?”

“Midoriya, right? What can I help you with?” Mandalay looked at him curiously, her hand halfway to her mouth with her chopsticks full of rice. Behind her, Pixie-Bob and Ragdoll also watched him with interest while Tiger’s expression was inscrutable.

Stuttering with nerves, he said, “I-I just saw Kota going into the f-forest alone. I just didn’t want him going off on h-his own and g-getting hurt.”

“Oh!” Mandalay turned to look at the path that Kota disappeared down. She frowned. “He didn’t eat before he left, did he Pixie-Bob?” When the blond shook her head in the negative, the red Pussycat sighed. “I’ll have to get him to eat when he gets back then.” She turned back to Izuku, “Thanks for letting me know, but Kota does this all the time. He doesn’t like it when I follow him, so I just him have some alone time.”

Izuku bit his lip, his eyes gazing at the empty trailhead and gauging when the sun would be going down. Worry clawed at him, even after Mandalay’s assurances that this was completely normal for the young child. *He shouldn’t be alone out there. What if he gets hurt? No one would know.* Izuku cleared his throat and freed his lip from his teeth’s death grip. “I’ll b-bring him some food, if that’s okay?”

Mandalay smiled gently, “That’s kind of you. If you’d like to, feel free. Don’t take it personally if he tells you to leave him alone, though.”

Izuku nodded, then bowed his head in thanks and farewell. He tossed together a bowl for Kota and grabbed a set of bamboo chopsticks before hurrying up the trail after the boy. The trail was mostly flat until it came to the base of a large outcropping of rock. From the base Izuku could see Kota’s little feet hanging over the edge as the young boy watched the sun go down. Izuku scrambled up the steep incline with difficulty as he tried to keep his balance and not drop the bowl at the same time. He cursed himself for using One for All and breaking his arm. Climbing the rocky trail would be significantly easier if one arm wasn’t trapped in a cast.

He reached the top of the gray, jutting rock, his breaths coming in fast pants as his weak muscles burned. He bent over with his good arm propping him up against his knee. This was by far the most activity

he'd seen since the practical exam a week and a half ago, and while he was better fed, he still needed to get his physical strength back from such a severe injury and lack of appropriate diet.

Standing straight from his bent over position, Izuku strode toward where Kota sat. The child must have been deep in thought, because he didn't notice Izuku's approach until he was only a few feet away. The green-haired teen scuffed his boot against the pebble-covered stone and held out the bowl when Kota whirled around to stare at him. "I-I brought you some food. I didn't s-see you eat anything earlier."

Kota simply watched him with a stubborn set to his face as Izuku set the bowl down beside him. The young child didn't reply. Izuku tapped his red boot against the stone beneath them and watched the sunset like Kota had been moments before. He slowly dropped to hang his skinny legs over the edge as well, muttering, "The sunset is r-really pretty."

Kota snorted, "What are you doing here?" He turned away from Izuku, but the teen caught him eyeing the rice bowl. Izuku pushed it towards him.

"I th-thought you might be hungry. And…" he paused as he considered his response. It felt…personal somehow. Though he only met Kota yesterday, he felt a certain amount of kinship with the young child. "I…didn't want you to b-be alone."

Kota picked up the bowl and picked at the food with his chopsticks, a sour look on his face. "What if I want to be alone?" He grumbled as he ate begrudgingly. He turned his body slightly away from Izuku so the teen couldn't see his expression.

Izuku stared at the red and orange sky as the hot sun began to dip behind the tree line. Long shadows stretched across the clearing in front of the cabin as lights began flickering on in windows and camp fires sprung up outside. The air was cool now, a far cry from the blistering heat of the summer day. Izuku felt a soft breeze caressing his curls as he considered Kota's question. "If that's w-what you want, I c-can go. I just thought you might like some c-company. I know I would wh-when…" He couldn't finish the sentence. *When mom left—NO. She's coming back!*

Izuku made to stand from his position with his legs over the ledge, but was stopped when Kota grunted, "When what? When my mom and dad left me? I know auntie told you."

Izuku lowered himself down, watching Kota's upset expression grow angry as he finished his bowl and dropped it on the stone next to him. The young boy didn't give Izuku a chance to respond. "What would you even know about it? You don't know what it's like for your parents to choose being stupid heroes over staying alive! And you want to be just like them! You and all your dumb friends trying to be famous heroes! It's stupid! You'll just get yourselves killed fighting villains and leave everyone behind!"

Izuku watched Kota as he exploded with anger at him. He didn't take it personally. If Izuku and Kota's situations were switched, the teen was sure he would react in the same way. He let Kota scream at him as he felt a familiar clenching around his chest. *Kota's parents loved him so much, I know. He wouldn't be this upset otherwise. He's hurting so badly because they loved him with their whole hearts.* Izuku's eyes filled with unshod tears for both Kota and himself. *Mom didn't love me like that—Shut up of course she did—Then why did she leave?—She's coming back— Maybe . She said maybe —SHE'S. COMING. BACK!*

"Why don't you just go back to your lame friends and keep training? Just leave me alone! I don't want to talk to idiot heroes like you! You're just—"

"I think," Izuku mumbled, cutting into Kota's tirade. His quiet intensity stopped the young boy mid-sentence. Kota stared at Izuku, who had a far-off look in his eyes as he gazed into the setting sun. The sky turned from reds and oranges to a deep purple. Izuku continued, "If your parents had a choice, they would have chosen to stay."

Kota retorted, "They did have a choice! They chose to be stupid heroes instead of doctors or police officers or something!"

Izuku shook his head, his mind racing. "They chose to save people as a c-career. But when they fought that v-villain, they couldn't choose. There was only o-one option. If they c-could have chosen you, they would have." *Dad chose his work. That's fine, he supported us. But mom…mom chose—*

Kota watched Izuku intensely, dark eyes scanning his freckled face with a crease between his eyes. His little shoulders drooped as he recognized something in the expression on Izuku's face. "You…you know, don't you? What it's like?"

Izuku wasn't sure what Kota meant. *Know what it's like to lose your parents? Of course not! They're both alive.* His stomach clenched at the

thoughts, and a frown appeared on his forehead. His breathed in unsteadily as he fought to keep a wave of tears from falling. His chest clenched painfully around his heart. *Both alive…and not with me.* He swallowed down the bitter taste in his mouth and shook the thoughts from his mind.

"You do," Kota stated, all sense of anger leaving him. He looked up at Izuku with questioning eyes. "Your parents didn't choose you either, did they?"

Reeling back from the question, Izuku felt a tear slide down his freckled cheek and wiped at it quickly. Trying to cover the bitter sadness welling in his chest, Izuku replied, "W-what? I-I don't know w-what—"

Kota stood, his little legs only giving him enough height to see Izuku eye-to-eye while Izuku sat on the cool stone. His dark eyes stared into Izuku's green ones with the understanding of shared heartache. "We both got left behind," he stated.

Izuku stared at him as he clenched his jaw to keep from letting out the embarrassing sob that was begging to escape him. *Mom left me. She didn't want to stay. She doesn't love me, otherwise she'd still be here. Mom's not coming back. She doesn't want me. I'm quirkless, useless, not worth having as a son! Quirkless deku! No one wants you!* A stuttering gasp left him as he held back the wave of anguish rolling over chest. His heart ached as his stomach twisted in knots. His arms shook with restrained grief, and he turned away from Kota's gaze to wipe at his streaming eyes.

His voice unsteady from the wrenching sobs he was attempting to keep at bay, Izuku said, "I-It's getting l-late. W-we should h-head back d-down."

Kota watched him quietly before nodding and picking up his bowl. He reached up to grab Izuku's free hand as they walked toward the trail leading back to the cabin. Izuku was grateful for it. It grounded him in the here and now and allowed him to traverse down the steep slope with more focus. They quickly reached the bottom of the cliff and began walking along the trail back to the well-lit cabin. Kota continued to hold Izuku's hand but didn't say anything. Both boys were quiet until they reached the edge of the clearing.

Kota let go of Izuku's hand and looked up, his eyes red around the edges. "Can I sit with you tomorrow at breakfast?"

Izuku nodded with a small smile, “S-sure.” Kota nodded, then ran off toward where the Pussycats were sitting around a fire. Izuku watched him go silently, then went inside to get his hoodie. He returned Shouta’s hoodie at lunch, so his skin was bare to the nighttime chill of the forest. Goosebumps raised along his exposed forearm as he hurried past his classmates without greeting them. He wound through the hallways of the cabin instead of taking the main hallway to avoid anyone seeing the redness in his eyes and the blotchiness of his cheeks as he made his way to his cot. Luckily, he met no one from his own class along the way, and the one student from Class 1-B he saw was more interested in their phone than him.

He yanked his yellow All-Might hoodie over his head and pulled up the hood to hide his face. He breathed heavily as he attempted to calm himself, but the tightness in his chest wouldn’t go away, nor would the intrusive thoughts. *No one wants you. You’re completely worthless if your own mother couldn’t even be bothered to stay around. Why are you here?* He unzipped the small side pocket of his backpack and grabbed what lay there, stuffing it into the large pocket of his hoodie.

Izuku wiped large droplets of tears from his green eyes as he turned to exit the boys’ sleeping quarters. He wasn’t sure where Shouta was teaching the remedial students, but he knew he had to find him. *You’re not even having a panic attack. Why would he care? You’re just a cry baby who didn’t realize his mom was gone for good.*

He breathed in stuttering breaths as he slowly walked through the cabin. Any room with noise or lights on inside he pressed his ear against. Each room held only students playing some game or another. Izuku continued through the cabin, even peeking into the bath area to see if any of the remedial students were there.

*I need Shouta,* he thought.

*He doesn’t care,* another, cynical voice answered.

*I can’t stop crying.*

*So? What’s he going to do?*

*He can help.*

*Why would a pro hero care about you crying?*

*I feel like I’m drowning.*

*You're worthless, go cry in a corner like the baby you are*

*Gotta find Shouta…*

Izuku pulled up to an open door with bright light streaming out of it. He heard from inside, "…Kaminari, write the most important law of heroics on the board." The low, bored tone was familiar. *Shouta.* Izuku stepped into the light from the doorway and looked into the small classroom. Aizawa-sensei leaned against a desk on the far side of the room next to Vlad King, while the remedial students watched Kaminari writing on the chalkboard. Shouta's dark eyes flicked from Kaminari to Izuku without moving his head. His eyes flashed with worry and he frowned. He signed, *'Are you okay?'* by his thigh.

Izuku leaned back and slid down the wall opposite the door in the hallway. He curled his knees up and wrapped his free arm around them as he tried to hold himself together. He felt his face screw up as he held in his sobs. Shouta's dark eyes watched him with concern while Izuku shook his head in the negative. The dark-haired man spelled out a new question. *'What's wrong?'*

Izuku wiped his eyes and tried to breathe through the clenching in his chest. He didn't feel like he could get enough oxygen through the heartache. His whole body was tense and weak at the same time.

*I need Shouta's help.*

*You should just go away. No one wants you.*

*Shouta will know what to do.*

Slowly, painfully, he spell-signed his response. *'My mom isn't coming back, is she?'*

Shouta leaned over to Vlad King and whispered something, then pushed away from the desk as Vlad spoke loudly, "Good, Kaminari. Now, Monoma, why do you think this is the most important law in heroics?"

Shouta strode out of the classroom and crouched in front of Izuku's curled up form. He slowly reached out to rub his knuckles gently against the back of Izuku's hand. "Do you want to go somewhere more private?" He muttered quietly. Izuku sniffed heavily, then nodded. Gently, Shouta mumbled, "Alright. Hop up." He helped Izuku stand on shaking legs and wrapped his arm around thin, trembling shoulders. Izuku retreated deeper into the hood of his jacket, the two yellow

flaps representing All Might's hair sticking straight up with how tight Izuku pulled the hood over his head.

Shouta led them through the cabin, thankfully meeting very few students along the way, and the few they did meet wanted to avoid the home room teacher in fear of more training before the night's end. The dark-haired man opened the door to his room and let Izuku walk in before him. Izuku glanced around the large room, taking in the scene while he shook with emotion. A small kitchenette was in one corner, and it quickly morphed into a small living room complete with a couch and TV. Across the room was another door, which Izuku assumed led to the actual sleeping area.

Shouta motioned for him to sit down on the couch while he put the kettle in the kitchen on. Izuku dropped onto the soft cushion and leaned forward while he clutched at his stomach. The ache in his chest had only gotten worse as they walked from the classroom, and his stomach was twisted in painful knots. His breathing was uneven as sobs fought to escape him. He pulled his legs as close to his body as he could while still sitting, only managing to squeeze his calves together tightly. He was so hunched over he could see the individual scabs from scraping his knees the night before in clear detail. He tried to focus on them, but his vision clouded over rapidly with tears as they dropped unendingly from his green eyes.

*When will you stop crying? No wonder mom left. Even she didn't cry this much.*

*I'm trying, it won't stop.*

*You're too weak to stop. Isn't that why you got Aizawa? You thought he would help.*

*Shouta will know what to do. He's helped before!*

Shouta sat next to Izuku and ran a soothing hand over his ward's back. He wasn't sure what changed from the end of dinner to now, but Izuku's sign-spelled question had him reeling. The kid adamantly refused to believe his mother wasn't coming back since leaving the hospital, and, if Shouta was being honest with himself, he expected that mindset to last until Izuku was in therapy and beyond. But he knew grief worked in strange ways, and he knew better than to expect izuku to conform to any preconceived notions he had.

Shouta waited several moments before speaking, "Do you want to talk or do you need me to just sit with you?"

Izuku took in a shuddering breath as he thought it over. His mind was at war with itself, simultaneously saying he was too weak and should get over it already, and yearning for the comfort Shouta could provide.

Voice quiet and strained, he whispered, “I-I…” He wanted to say what was racing through his mind, but couldn’t quite get it out. He settled with, “I w-want to talk.”

Shouta nodded and continued the soothing circles over Izuku’s back. He leaned forward to hear him better. He matched Izuku’s volume as he grunted, “Alright. Where do you want to start?”

Izuku felt his abdomen spasm with a sob and he let out a high-pitched whimper. Shouta’s large, warm hand moved up to his shoulder and squeezed. His other hand reached over to hold Izuku’s. The teen grasped it quickly, clenching his fingers around Shouta’s with as much strength as he had.

“I’m s-so stupid…” Izuku keened. “I k-kept telling myself s-she would…would come back.” He sniffed heavily as tears continued dripping off his cheeks and onto his knees. He felt small rivers of the salty liquid flowing down his calves and stopping at his boots.

“You’re not stupid,” Shouta admonished gently, still squeezing Izuku’s hand. He pulled the teen against him with the hand on his shoulder.

“I am!” Izuku rasped, shaking. “I k-knew she wasn’t going t-to come back the wh-whole time, b-but I was j-just…” He searched for the right words, but none came. He bit his lip hard enough to taste blood.

“You did what you needed to in order to keep going. That’s okay. It’s not wrong to hope your mother would return.” Shouta’s voice was low and gentle, like soft caramel and dark chocolate. It was soothing to Izuku’s frazzled nerves, but no amount of soothing touches or words could ease the ache in his chest.

“B-but I knew she wasn’t! S-she wouldn’t have s-sold the furniture o-or left without giving me some money or sh-she would have said g-goodbye in person instead of l-leaving a note! I w-was just…deluding myself!” Izuku’s anguish took an angry tone as he raged at himself for his stupid fantasy. *Idiot, of course she wasn’t. She practically told you in her note didn’t she? ‘Maybe’ doesn’t mean ‘yes’!*

Shouta let Izuku talk. He knew that if the words were flowing now, he should only encourage the teen to let the words out along with all the

emotion behind them. Izuku was a bottle full to bursting, and his lid finally blew off. Shouta knew this from his own experiences, and so he let Izuku talk, only encouraging when needed.

Izuku continued, his chest clenching terribly as he see-sawed between misery and anger. His diaphragm hitched with each wheezing breath. “Detective Tsukauchi k-knew she wasn’t coming b-back, that’s w-why he w-wanted to talk to m-me, right? B-because my m-mom did s-something illegal w-when she left?” Izuku turned to look at Shouta for confirmation, his green eyes shining and desperate for him to say no. No. Your mother *is* coming home.

The pro hero sighed and pulled Izuku closer. Izuku still held a smidgen of hope that he was wrong, but Shouta knew it would be best to get it all out now. Rip off the bandaid and let the teen begin to heal. “Yes,” he agreed. “That’s why Tsukauchi wanted to talk to you.”

Izuku pushed himself up a little from his curled up position as he searched Shouta’s face. His chin trembled. “I lied to Detective Tsukauchi,” he admitted. A frown formed between Shouta’s eyebrows as he cocked his head to the side. Izuku’s expression darkened as the tears came faster.

“When?” Shouta asked, confused at the sudden turn of conversation.

“Wh-when I said I didn’t h-have the note my m-mom left.” He released his grip on Shouta’s fingers, noting the white fingers as blood rushed back into them. He shoved his hand into the pocket of his hoodie, grasping the small piece of folded paper and bringing it out into view. “I-it was in my b-backpack the wh-whole time.” He shoved the paper at a surprised Shouta. “Y-you can h-have it. I-it’s evidence now, r-right? I’m n-not in t-trouble for this, am I?”

“Kid,” Shouta whispered, gently setting the paper on the small coffee table and turning back to Izuku. “You’re not in trouble. And it’s not evidence either. Detective Tsukauchi just wanted to know what your mom said.”

“I l-looked it up after s-she left,” Izuku continued, eyeing the crumple white paper on the dark brown wood. “Child a-abandonment is illegal in J-Japan. S-so, she’s a c-criminal now, and th-that’s evidence that she l-left and isn’t c-coming back. Why else w-would a detective be i-involved?”

Izuku clutched his stomach again, feeling with certainty that he was right. It didn’t bring him any amount of relief from the ache in his

chest or the twisting of his insides. If anything, it made it worse. He felt a headache coming on from the endless stream of tears running down his cheeks. It throbbed in the back of his skull and added to the overall feeling of misery over him.

Shouta sighed, realizing he may have made another mistake with his kid. “Tsukauchi and I work a lot of cases together. I asked him to do me a favor when we couldn’t find your mother while you were at the hospital. That’s why he was involved.”

Izuku accepted Shouta’s explanation, but his analytical mind knew there was more to it. “Did h-he find my mom? I h-heard you t-talking in the hall about c-calling my dad.”

The pro hero considered whether he should answer honestly or not. It was one thing for Izuku to assume his mother left on purpose, but to hear that his mother admitted it with no regret when Tsukauchi finally got ahold of her? That she said she would happily sign her parental rights away to whoever wanted them if it meant she could return to Japan without being arrested? Shouta didn’t think Izuku needed to hear that.

“He hasn’t yet. Your father’s business is trying to track down a phone number for him.” Shouta kept his face neutral, not giving anything away.

Izuku slumped again, his face falling into deep sadness again. He swayed, looking like he would fall over at any moment. Shouta tucked the teen into his side and leaned back against the couch cushions. Izuku curled into him like a cat seeking warmth, his free hand coming up to clutch at Shouta’s hero costume as he shuddered against him.

Izuku buried his head in Shouta’s side, breathing in the familiar scent of sandalwood and incense that permeated the apartment Shouta and Hizashi shared. He spotted a single cat hair tucked into the folds of Shouta’s capture weapon and felt a slight warmth in his chest that was quickly smothered by the weight of his own misery.

They sat quietly for several minutes while Izuku ran out of tears. His mouth was incredibly dry, and the throbbing headache felt like a boa constrictor wrapped around his skull. His chest still ached and his shoulders trembled. In a small voice, Izuku asked, “Did she ever love me?”

Shouta shut his eyes against the immense amount of hurt in Izuku’s voice. The kid was sixteen and already held more pain than he ought

to. “I’m sure she did,” he assured, his voice low and quiet.

“Then why did she leave?” Izuku’s tone was so beaten down and defeated Shouta could only pull him closer to reassure him.

“I don’t know. I’m sorry.”

Izuku nodded against his side. “She didn’t want me…” He mumbled quietly as his headache throbbed dully. His eyes were tired, and he was exhausted. “No one does.”

Shouta felt Izuku slump against him, all tension leaving his body as he fell into unconsciousness. The pro hero sighed and tucked Izuku’s head under his chin.

“I want you, kid.”

—

Several miles away from the Wild Wild Pussycats’ cabin, six figures stood on a rocky outcropping overlooking the expanse of dark forest. A tall, skinny man with jet-black hair and several rings holding the severely burned skin over his jaw to the healthy skin on his cheeks observed the bright lights of the cabin with a bored scowl. He turned to the blond girl next to him.

“Is the last guy here yet?”

“Nope!” She chimed, jumping up and down as she twirled a large syringe in her hand.

The tall man sighed and turned away from the cabin. “We’ll wait until tomorrow night, but if he isn’t here, we’re starting without him.”

The girl let out an excited, “Yay!” The other four figures all nodded at him in agreement.

“I kinda hope he doesn’t show up,” the man with the damaged skin admitted as they walked back to their small circle of tents. “More fun for the rest of us.”

Chapter End Notes

> Me: Hello hello! And welcome back to another chapter of Left Over! Tonight we have a guest here with us, papamic! Say hello!
>
> Papamic: Yo! Why don't I get to love on the little green bean as

much as Shouta??? I'm Izuku's new dad too!

Me: Because I said so! And now, on to our sponsors!

Jk I'm just really tired. Like, REALLY tired.

Enjoy the chapter! I can't leave Izuku alone, and for good reason! He's a precious, hurt green bean and he needs more bonding time with dadzawa. I've made my decision. Anyway, I hope y'all are having a great week so far, and I'll see you next time!

Like the story? Like chatting with people about it? Like chatting in general? Here's my shameless plug for my discord server! Come join us! https://discord.gg/c2gTtJUGy9

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Shouta stared at the large painting on the opposite wall from his position on the couch. Izuku fell into a fitful sleep over an hour ago, but he still couldn't move without waking the kid. So he gazed at the painting. Anything to keep his mind from the endless curiosity that was the folded note on the coffee table. What did Midoriya Inko decide to write on that piece of notebook paper when she made the final steps to leave her son forever? Was it words of comfort? Wishing him a good life and saying he'd be better off without her? Or did she lay out her true feelings and break the kid's heart in the process? Shouta had a hunch that he knew which it was, but he pulled his thoughts away from the benign paper sitting unassumingly on top of the brown wooden table.

The painting. It wasn't particularly good, but certainly not the worst he'd ever seen in the myriad of public buildings and temporary rooms he stayed in throughout his life. He supposed it depicted the surrounding forest, though it could have been any forest in Japan, to be fair. No landmarks designated the painted location as a specific spot, only a sea of green that matched Izuku's curly hair.

The kid shifted against his arm as Shouta gazed at the rather uninteresting painting. His dark eyes drifted back to the white square settled atop the rickety coffee table. He itched to lean forward and pick it up, but he restrained himself with the self control he prided himself on. Izuku desperately needed rest after the rollercoaster of emotions that was the first few days of camp, and he was loath to be the one to deprive him of it. He returned his gaze to the painting as he listened to the gentle breathing of the teen tucked into his side. Izuku truly was tiny when he was curled up like this. He was by no means the shortest or smallest of his current students, but his timid personality almost seemed to shrink him. Or maybe it was the way he tried to avoid attention by curling in on himself. Shouta noticed the behavior from day one, but didn't put much additional thought into it until now.

*Bakugo's quirk. Kota calling him stupid for becoming a hero. His hero name: Deku. His mother.* Shouta cataloged the young boy's triggers meticulously, not wanting to let a single one slip. While he understood

some of them, the rest were what gave the pro hero pause. *Bakugo's quirk. Deku.* There was something there, tugging at the back of his mind. What was it?

His eyes flicked to the note, wondering if the answer lay within the handwriting of one Midoriya Inko. *No*, he thought. *Unrelated. At least currently.* The forest painting returned to focus, the green peaks of pine trees laid out in a simplistic pattern easily sent him to his mind's eye for something more interesting to look at. *Bakugo's quirk. Start there.*

Izuku's reaction to the explosive quirk this morning was unexpected. The two were paired together for more than one Fundamental Heroics exercise throughout their first semester at UA, and Izuku should be used to the sound and sight of the blond's explosions. *Doesn't mean it hasn't affected him. Familiarity does not equal comfort,* he reminded himself, then took a step back mentally.

Izuku is familiar with Bakugo's quirk now, and, in fact, was familiar with it on the first day during the Quirk Apprehension test. Though Shouta's dark eyes were drilling into a single point on the forest scape depicted on his wall, his focus was on the memory of Class 1-A's first day. Izuku and two other students were unsurprised at Bakugo's quirk that day, he remembered. But there were several groups of students familiar with other's quirks as well. Thinking through the groups, he realized they corresponded to which battle city section each student took their entrance exam in, with the exception of Midoriya and Bakugo. Those two were in separate cityscapes during the entrance exam.

Shouta recalled the final ball toss from the Quirk Apprehension test. As much as Midoriya was *un*surprised by Bakugo's quirk, the explosive blond seemed almost *angry* upon seeing Izuku's. *"Where the hell did you get a quirk, deku?! You must have cheated!"*

That was it. Deku. The two must have known each other before UA for Bakugo to have such a nickname ready to fling at the green-haired teen. *Deku.* Useless. Shouta shook his head at the cruelty of young children, then continued his thoughts on the young man tucked under his arm and breathing evenly. *Why would Bakugo thing Izuku cheated? He got into UA with excellent scores, both in the written exam and the practical test.* Something twinged at the back of Shouta's mind. *Deku.* Seems an odd choice of nickname or insult. Usually it was nerd, or loser, or, and Shouta could see this coming from Bakugo especially, bastard. Deku seemed like a step further than the usual insults.

*"Where the hell did you get a quirk."* Shouta mumbled to himself. *A* quirk. Not 'another quirk,' not 'a different quirk.' *A* quirk.

"Shit," Shouta grunted, looking down at the beat-down kid beside him. Bakugo wasn't surprised at Izuku's *new* power. He was surprised at Izuku having one *at all.* With a rush of understanding, several inconsistencies and strange behaviors of Izuku's clicked into place. The lack of quirk control, attending quirk counseling once a year,no regard for his own safety, heightened anxiety and self-protective behaviors, only and, most of all, an excessive hero worship of one Yagi Toshinori.

Shouta pinched the bridge of his nose hard enough to cause his eyes to water. *Izuku was a late bloomer. He didn't know he had a quirk less than six months ago.* Shouta wasn't unaware of the statistics regarding quirkless or false negative children born in Japan. Quirkism was rampant in this country, and even applied to those like him with mental or otherwise 'villainous' quirks. But nothing quite compared to the dangers the quirkless and supposed quirkless faced. Izuku was probably one of the rarest children in Japan by a simple fluke of genetics, and he was deemed by society to be the lowest of the low, not worth human decency or kindness. Worthless. Useless. *Deku.*

Shouta's arm tightened around the thin shoulders of a teen who he knew had seen too much and fought too hard to even make it to his sixteenth birthday. All the unfairness and mistreatment he himself faced in his early years was nothing to what Shouta knew Izuku must have endured, and he raged at the world on the teen's behalf.

"This kid," he grunted, compiling a list of questions he had for Nedzu when the next semester started. Namely, why the *hell* he wasn't informed of Izuku's quirk status beforehand. There was absolutely no reason good enough to excuse putting Izuku in danger of killing himself because he didn't know how to use a brand new quirk. *Reckless endangerment of a minor from Japan's number one hero school? What would Izuku's mother have to say?* He stopped, dark eyes flicking to the little note sitting innocently on the coffee table. What *did* Midoriya Inko have to say on the matter? One would think that her son finally manifesting a quirk would be a joyous occasion, but, instead, she left at the earliest opportunity. She stuck around for fifteen years only to abandon him as soon as he got one of the strongest strength quirks Shouta ever trained?

Slowly as to not wake Izuku, who was now snoring gently against him, Shouta leaned forward and lifted the note from the wooden

surface. He leaned back against the couch and let them both settle before opening the note with one hand. He began to scan the handwritten words, and, as he did, he saw red.

*Izuku,*

*By now, I'm sure you noticed that some things have changed around the house, but I want to start off by saying that no, I'm not kidnapped or hurt in any way. I got an opportunity to move abroad and live with your dad again! Isn't that so exciting? I had to sell all the furniture to pay for the plane ticket, but I tried to leave everything in your room untouched. You need a bed to sleep in, afterall. ;)*

*I can't tell you how elated I am to see your dad again after all these years, and I can only hope you'll forgive me for not telling you. I couldn't afford to move both of us to America, you see, and you're doing so well at UA! I couldn't pull you out of your dream school like that! Not when you have this new fantastic quirk and can be a hero like you've always wanted! I didn't want to get in the way of your dream. I know I haven't been the most supportive of you in the past, but can you really blame me? I didn't want you to get hurt, sweetie. And you were getting hurt even before you started going to UA. Do you know how much those hospital bills cost?*

*I paid for the apartment until your next semester starts, so you have a couple months to find a job and support yourself. I'm sure somewhere will hire you now that you have such a great quirk! I also had some leftovers from the last couple days that I'm leaving in the freezer for you. I don't want you to starve! You're still my sweet son, and I'll take care of you the best that I can, even when I'm in America. Maybe you can ask your friend Uraraka for tips on living by yourself? You and her are in the same boat now, so she can probably help you find somewhere cheap to buy groceries.*

*My taxi is coming in just a minute, so I have to get going. Send us a postcard when you're getting close to graduating from UA, and we can come cheer you on! Your dad's doing so well at work, he might even get a bonus this year. Maybe we can come visit for a week or so before your next semester starts.*

*I hope you do so well at UA, honey. Even though I won't be there to see you finish growing up, I want you to know that I love you and I'm so proud of you!*

*Love,*

*Mom*

Shouta shook with absolute rage. The only thing that kept him from throwing something across the room was the soft weight of Izuku against his side. His quirk activated and black hair rose straight into the air as his glowing red eyes glared burned holes into the words printed on the cheap notebook paper. He was surprised the sheet didn't ignite with the force of his gaze.

This woman had the *audacity* to wish her son well as she ripped every support system he had out from under him? Shouta wanted to run to the airport immediately to find this woman, this disgrace of a mother, and drag her through the streets of her new home with a sign declaring her crimes for all her neighbors to see. He wanted to destroy every ounce of happiness Midoriya Inko left her only son for.

*Leftovers in the freezer? Three months rent?* Shouta couldn't imagine the kind of irrational delusions a person would need to imagine a freezer full of leftovers and a few months of rent would be enough to sustain a growing boy for three years. *And she has the nerve to suggest coming back for his graduation?* Shouta almost hoped she would be there so he and Tsukauchi could have the pleasure of arresting her themselves, but reigned that fantasy in.

The note confirmed several things for Shouta. 1. Izuku was a late bloomer. 2. Midoriya Inko is a terrible mother and will never see her son again. 3. Shouta would do anything to right the wrongs done to his kid.

Knowing the message wouldn't get to Hizashi and Tsukauchi for several hours due to the poor reception at the Wild Wild Pussycats' cabin, Shouta carefully took a picture of Midoriya Inko's note and sent it to both of them. He folded the paper and tossed it onto the table again lest the words infuriate him anew and leaned his head against the back of the couch. His eyes ached from the unintentional quirk activation earlier, so he shut them against the soft light in the room

His mind reeled with all the information he discovered in the last twenty minutes. Izuku's triggers no longer seemed to come from nowhere. *Deku. Kota doubting he can be a hero. His mother leaving. Bakugo's quirk…* The last gave him pause. The two boys knew each other before UA, that was clear. Based on the blond's nickname for Izuku, Shouta doubted if their relationship was friendly. But enough that Izuku froze upon hearing Bakugo's explosions unexpectedly? Concerning.

Shouta glanced at the time. Almost nine o'clock. Lights out time for

the students. He groaned. Tonight was his night to get the two classes settled.

Gently, very gently and slow, Shouta removed his arm from around Izuku's shoulders and laid him down on the soft couch cushion. The kid shifted, his eyebrows pulling together in his sleep as he was moved from his comfortable position. The pro hero glanced around for anything to use as a pillow, and spotted his Present Mic hoodie. He wrapped it into a soft lump and tucked it under Izuku's curly head of hair. When the kid didn't wake, Shouta left the room on silent feet and strode to the two rooms full of cots currently housing his and Vlad's students.

The girls were already tucked into their sleeping bags, chatting and giggling, when he knocked and called for lights out. The six girls in his home room all called out, "Yes, Aizawa-sensei!" He nodded with a bored expression and flicked off the light as he left, the wooden door closing behind him.

Moving to the much larger room housing all the boys, Shouta opened the door and quickly counted heads. Satisfied at the number, he called for the much rowdier group to settle down and get to bed. As everyone scrambled for their cots, Iida called to him from near the door.

"Aizawa-sensei? Midoriya left after dinner, and I didn't see him at the baths afterward. He's also not present in this room, sir!" Iida's usually controlled face was scrunched with worry. His dark brown eyes kept glancing at the empty green sleeping bag next to his own.

Shouta checked that none of the other students were paying attention and found them all complaining about going to bed but climbing onto their cots regardless. He turned back to Iida and quietly answered, "Midoriya isn't sleeping here for personal reasons, but he did return after dinner. You'll see him in the morning." He turned to flick off the light, but stopped when Iida's concerned voice cut through the general hubbub of students.

"Sir, is Izuku alright?"

Shouta glanced back at Iida. Outwardly, he kept his typical bored expression, but inside he felt glad that Izuku had friends that cared for him deeply. *Well, he does* now *at least.* "He's fine, Iida. You can talk to him at breakfast. Goodnight."

Iida nodded, looking less worried as Aizawa's body language remained

calm and easy going. The tall boy slipped into his cot as Shouta eyed the room. He waited until the last teen settled before flipping off the overhead lights and closing the door with a definitive *click*.

He sighed as he headed back toward the private room he got to call his own for this trip, nodding at Mandalay in greeting and wishing her a goodnight as she carried young Kota off to bed. When he entered the hallway containing his door, Vlad waved at him with a large hand. The pro was dressed in casual clothes now that the students were in bed: red t-shirt and khaki shorts instead of the skintight costume and boots. His white hair remained spiked up, however.

“Aizawa, drinks tonight?”

Shouta shook his head and felt the tell-tale thrum of a headache building in his temple. “Not tonight,” he grunted as he passed the taller man with a tired slump to his gait.

Vlad frowned, “Something come up? You were all for it at lunch.” He watched Shouta pass him with some measure of disappointment. Shouta turned to glance at his fellow teacher as he reached for the door handle, giving him a look that said *yes, Vlad, what gave it away?*

The blood hero rolled his eyes and scoffed, “Don’t give me that look. Let me guess, something about why Midoriya came to find you?”

Shouta sighed and resumed his neutrally bored expression. “Yeah,” he said simply, and opened the door to his room.

Vlad shrugged, “Maybe tomorrow then. I’ll go see if Tiger wants in.” He turned to walk toward the lounge where they spent the previous night with the Pussycats. Shouta stepped into his room with only a soft *tap tap* when his boots hit the hardwood floors. The door closed quietly behind him as he observed the still form of his ward on the couch. He eyed the red boots still tied to Izuku’s feet, the uncomfortable way the teen’s cast-covered arm was scrunched under his ribs, and the slight indent between the kid’s eyebrows.

Shouta sighed and dimmed the lights in the room down to a single lamp in the corner, then set the kettle to boil again, realizing that he never actually made either of them tea when Izuku first came in. Once the water was heating, he untied Izuku’s boots with gentle tugs of the laces and tucked his feet up onto the couch after they were free from their trappings. The dark-haired man pulled a thin blanket from the back of the couch and draped it over Izuku. With a soft pressure, he leaned the sleeping boy back so he wasn’t laying directly on his

broken arm, then moved into the small kitchenette to prepare his tea.

His dark eyes closed tiredly as he leaned against the small countertop. The quiet bubbling of heating water lulled him into a lethargic haze that he knew would disappear as soon as he tried to lay down. Sleep was a cruel mistress. The kettle reached boiling and the small lever clicked into its upright position to show it was ready. He poured hot water into his mug and watched as the tea leaves immediately darkened the liquid to a light brown.

His cell phone buzzed. He frowned, wondering how he had any reception at all, and was pleasantly surprised to see three bars at the top of his screen. Glancing down at the notification, he saw Hizashi's nickname and picture.

*Goldilocks: I may have to commit murder.*

Shouta waited a moment to see if Hizashi, who usually filled his messages with emojis and other very exuberant text, would continue or elaborate. He did not, so Shouta, taking advantage of the momentary burst of cell reception, responded.

Cat Dad: You may have to get in line.

*Goldilocks: I threw a glass across the room just now after reading that note >:( Tofu is meowing at me angrily. WTF?!*

Cat Dad: Don't scare my queen.

*Goldilocks: I thought I was ur queen??? I'm hurt!! And still angry for Izuku*

Cat Dad: I wasn't aware I married a female. This may be grounds for divorce.

*Goldilocks: I know ur distracting me and I appreciate it, but FIRST, I reject this divorce! Ur stuck with meeeee <3*

Cat Dad: Are you admitting to being female, then?

*Goldilocks: NO. But I am FaBuLoUs!!!*

Shouta snorted at the excessive rainbow flag emojis after Hizashi's message. He appreciated the ridiculous banter between them, especially after the revelations he had earlier. *Izuku was a false negative. Essentially quirkless for most of his life. I should have known, I should have realized—*

Hizashi sent another text.

*Goldilocks: But seriously, enough distracting me. U have cell reception, so tell me WTF with this note. I thought Izu said he didn't have it???*

Cat Dad: He lied, but he apologized for it.

He paused for a moment, sipped his tea, then sent:

Cad Dad: Izu? What happened to the vegetable one?

*Goldilocks: Green Bean is his real name, Shou, he needs a nickname*

*Goldilocks: NO DISTRACTIONS MISTER*

*Goldilocks: But I can't say I blame him. I'm furious just reading it, and I've never even met her!!*

Cat Dad: I figured she was selfish after hearing about Tsukauchi's conversation with her, but I didn't quite expect the extent of it.

*Goldilocks: I just about ruined the kitchen with my quirk earlier >:( >:(*

*Goldilocks: Wait, I can call u and vent about this!*

Not two seconds after the message came through, Shouta's phone started buzzing again. He hit the green button and held the phone up to his ear.

"Shou, I need you to talk me out of buying tickets to America right now. I can't believe this woman! She has this wonderful son who is just lovely and amazing and she writes that shitty letter? What the hell! Who does that! I'm so furious! A couple of leftovers in the freezer? Did she even pay attention to how she raised her own son? Of course that's not enough food! And she wrote a smiley face after saying she left his bedroom alone, as if that makes up for taking everything else and selling it?! I can't even fathom that line of thinking! I'm surprised Izuku is as calm about this whole thing as he is after reading that shit!" Hizashi took a deep breath and Shouta could hear him pacing through the kitchen. The dark-haired man waited for his husband to speak, partly to avoid waking Izuku on the couch, and partly because he didn't know what to say. If Izuku wasn't here, he probably would have punched a hole in the wall already.

Hizashi let out a huff, and Shouta heard the sound of him slumping into the couch. A soft meow came through the speaker. "You're as

mad about this as I am, right? You can't be okay with what that woman said to our sweet Green Bean."

Voice low, Shouta replied, "If I wasn't here, I'd already be on a plane, 'Zashi."

Hizashi huffed, "God, I want to yell at her so bad! Let's go to America for the weekend, sound good?"

Shouta rolled his eyes and sipped his tea. "Great plan. I'm sure Izuku won't mind another set of guardians running off to America suddenly."

The line was silent for a moment. "Shit," Hizashi groaned. "I guess we'll have to leave ruining her life for next year."

Shouta hummed in agreement, eyes watching the gentle rise and fall of Izuku's shoulders. The boy hadn't stirred since Shouta re-entered the room twenty minutes ago, and the pro was almost feeling jealous of the seemingly deep sleep the kid was in. But he shoved that away. Izuku deserved a good night's rest after realizing his mother was never coming back.

"You're quiet. Did I call at a bad time?" Hizashi's voice carried a measure of concern.

"No," Shouta replied with a drink of the warm liquid in his mug. "I just don't want to wake Izuku."

His husband sputtered on the other end of the phone call, "What? Shouldn't he be sleeping in the dorms? Shou, are you being creepy?"

He snorted and rolled his dark eyes. "He fell asleep on my couch. He needs the sleep after the last few days."

Hizashi asked, "Why? What happened?" The dark-haired hero explained quietly as he slowly finished his cup and brewed another. The clock was ticking close to midnight when he finished explaining Izuku's realization about his mother and the reason Shouta had access to the note. He kept his own epiphany about the green-haired teen to himself however. *Not my secret to tell.* If he was being honest with himself, he wanted to speak with Izuku about it first. Confirm his suspicions. Make sure he knew that Shouta wouldn't change because of it. *He trusts me. I don't want to lose that trust.*

"Poor kiddo," Hizashi sighed, his voice filled with genuine empathy. "I

knew this would happen eventually, I just…I guess I wished it wouldn't so he didn't have to hurt so bad."

"Better to do it sooner rather than later," Shouta replied, his mind flashing back to his old friend. Fluffy blue hair flopping down onto a smiling face. His chest clenched at the memory of the years following his death, and the denial he himself had to work through to eventually heal. It was better this way.

"Yeah." By the tone of Hizashi's voice, Shouta could tell his mind went to the same place. There was a long pause, then, "You gave him lots of hugs and reassurance though, right? None of your fake disgust for affection?"

Shouta snorted, hearing the smile in Hizashi's voice, "When I said he fell asleep on the couch, he really fell asleep on *me* on the couch." He shook his head, then turned more serious. Well, more than he usually was around Hizashi. The man had a way of bringing him out of his shell without even trying. He loved him for it. "I made sure he was alright."

"I'm glad you're with him, Shou. He really depends on you. I don't even know if he realizes."

"I doubt he wants me around as much as you. You're clearly his favorite of us both."

"Not true! He may have my merch, but that's because you don't have any. Well," Hizashi let out a laugh, "except for the *eraser head*."

Shouta rolled his eyes. "Merch or no, he likes you more."

"Nope!" Hizashi grinned and Shouta could hear it in his tone. "You're his favorite! I know you are!"

"I don't see how you came to that conclusion." Shouta set his mug in the tiny sink and shucked his boots by the door. He dimmed the lights further and tossed out his sleeping bag on the floor perpendicular to the couch. He could feel the sweet release of sleep easing over his mind like steam on a cold window in winter.

"He's always looking for your approval, Shou. Have you not noticed?"

He closed his eyes tightly as he leaned against the end of the couch in his yellow bag. "What?" He grunted.

Hizashi laughed. “Just keep an eye out for it, I’m sure you’ll notice it right away!”

“‘Zashi, he almost didn’t give me back my Present Mic hoodie this morning. You should have seen his face. It was like he was giving up a puppy or something. He clearly likes you more.”

Hizashi burst into hysterical laughter. Shouta glared at the wood paneling on the wall as if it could somehow transport his expression a hundred miles away to Hizashi at their apartment. “What’s so funny,” he said huffily, not even nothing to inflect his voice into a question.

“Shou! Hahah! He was sad because it was *yours*. He’s a fanboy at heart, of course he wants to keep your hoodie! It’s *Eraserhead’s hoodie*.”

“Bullshit,” Shouta grumbled, though he had to admit it made sense. Seeing what remained of Izuku’s All Might collection and how in-depth Izuku’s hero analysis was, he had to admit the kid was the ultimate fanboy. The memory of Izuku nearly having an aneurism at the hospital when Yagi gave him that All Might blanket made him grin secretly. The kid was very entertaining when he forgot to be nervous around other people.

“Let him borrow something else, see what happens! Or better yet, give him your hoodie again. You may never get it back, but you’ll know for sure!”

Shouta shook his head, his eyes slipping closed against the dim light of the lamp in the back corner. “I’m not going to make an experiment out of this because I know I’m right.”

“Fine. I’ll do the experiments when you both get back. We’ll see who the favorite is then. But I promise, it’s you.” Shouta could almost hear the teasing smile and wink from Hizashi.

“You’ll owe me a shoulder massage when I’m right.”

“And you’ll owe me a shopping trip when *I’m* right!”

“Deal.”

“Deal!”

Shouta shook his head at their antics, a small smile on his face as he slowly slid the rest of the way to the floor.

“You sound tired, so I’ll let you sleep, Love.”

Shouta hummed in agreeance, then whispered, “I love you.”

“I love you too, Shou-cat. Sleep well.”

Shouta sleepily clicked off his phone, still wondering at how he had enough reception to call Hizashi for as long as he did, then drifted into unconsciousness.

—

Izuku sat at the breakfast table eating his soup quietly as the rest of the students hustled around him grumbling about how sore they were. Tenya and Ochaco sat beside him, quietly chatting as Izuku just listened. Tenya kept throwing him strange looks, and he knew why. When he woke on Aizawa’s couch early this morning, he realized he never spoke to his friends after running off after Kota. They were likely worried, and Tenya more so because Izuku never returned to his cot afterward. Aizawa said he spoke to Tenya, but the boy was eyeing him with an inquisitive look that made Izuku feel as if the other teen was bursting to ask him something.

He stirred at his soup with little appetite. He still felt off-kilter from his revelation last night, and not at all ready to pretend like nothing happened. *No one wants me. I’m just a burden to everyone. Why am I even here. I can’t be a hero like this.*

“So, who are you going to analyze today, Izuku?” Ochaco asked, eyes bright but tired. Apparently Ashido was very excited to have a ‘sleepover’ with all the girls last night, and Ochaco was kept awake by their pillow fight after Aizawa called for lights out.

“Um…” Izuku tried to pull his thoughts away from the dark corner he found them returning to, and flipped through his notebook slowly. “I-I think maybe S-Sato, Hagakure, a-and Ashido? And Jiro and O-Ojiro if I h-have time.”

“Aw! Not me or Tenya yet? I was hoping you might be able to give me some pointers!” Ochaco slumped with her head propped up by her hand, a half-grumpy, half-joking smile on her face.

Izuku shrugged, “Maybe tomorrow? I-I wanted to s-save you guys for l-last.” He brought a spoonful of warm liquid to his mouth, surreptitiously watching Aizawa walk among the students from across the yard. The pro hero was fast asleep when Izuku startled awake this

morning, which proved to be both a blessing and a curse when Izuku immediately started panicking at his strange surroundings. He felt his teacher and guardian must be getting sick of the endless supply of panic attacks and crying spells. *Mom wouldn't put up with it anymore. That's why she's gone. If you keep this up, Aizawa will leave too.*

Izuku's gut clenched and he set his bowl down as the soup soured in his mouth. *No…* A small voice inside him whimpered. *Don't leave. Please.*

"Okay!" Ochaco cheered tiredly. "Hopefully you can get some good info for your homework. And maybe you can help me out too! It'll be fun!"

"Y-yeah," Izuku mumbled, his lip tight between his teeth as he glanced at Tenya. The dark brown eyes of the youngest Iida child shone with a burning question behind them and…concern?

"Izuku, I must ask—"

"Izu-chan!" A young voice called from behind Izuku. Recognizing the voice, but surprised at the nickname, the freckled teen turned to see Kota standing not far from their table holding his own bowl of soup. The six-year-old gave Izuku a quick smile, then glared at Ochaco and Tenya. "You said I could sit with you, remember?"

Izuku smiled at the child, then nodded. "Of course, Kota-chan." He patted the bench next to him and scooted over slightly to give him some room to climb up. The short boy set his bowl on the table and jumped slightly to get himself on the seat. Once he was settled, he grinned up at Izuku.

"Auntie said I can stay with you while you do your homework or whatever." He slurped up a spoonful of soup, then paused and looked up at Izuku with some trepidation. "That's okay, isn't it?"

Izuku smiled kindly, and nodded. Kota turned back to his breakfast happily, though he continued to give glares to both Tenya and Ochaco. The taller teen seemed unsure how to deal with the hostility, while Ochaco took it in stride.

"Good morning, Kota-kun!" She smiled happily and continued eating, excitedly looking around at the rest of the students who were gearing up for more quirk training.

"Uh…" Kota looked to Izuku momentarily, then said with a grumble,

“Good morning.”

The four of them continued chatting amiably, though it was more Ochaco chatting and everyone else listening as Tenya continued to watch Izuku strangely and Kota refused to talk to either of Izuku’s friends more than strictly necessary. Soon, Aizawa and Vlad King called for everyone to get to their training areas. Kota followed Izuku as he walked slowly out to the field Sato was stretching in, his own notebook (a coloring book) clutched tightly in his tiny hand.

Izuku quickly threw his mind into his analysis work. Anything to pull himself away from the dark cloud of unhappy thoughts last night brought forth. Every time he thought he might be sinking into the dark mire that surrounded thoughts of his mother, Kota would ask a question, or point out something Izuku didn’t note down, or ask to add a drawing to Izuku’s notebook. Kota’s presence was like a balm to his dark mood, and he soon found himself feeling…not happy, but not sad either.

When Izuku took a break from speaking to his classmates directly, he and Kota found a secluded spot to sit down and write. They sat quietly for several minutes before Kota said quietly, “I’m sorry I made you cry last night.” His eyes were focused on filling in a section of the fire truck he was working on.

Izuku glanced down at the spiked hat on the child’s head. “T-that’s okay. You d-don’t have to say s-sorry.”

Kota frowned at his picture, the red pencil in his hand hovering above the engine of the fire truck. Quietly, he murmured, “I don’t like it when people talk about… *them.* I didn’t realize you had the same thing too.”

Izuku looked out over the sea of trees that seemed so small from the cliff they sat on last night and so huge from their spot on the grassy ground. “I…” He started, then bit his lip. “I d-didn’t either.”

Kota gazed up at him sharply with warm brown eyes, a soft crease between his eyebrows. “But, you were crying,” he stated, confused.

Izuku sniffed heavily as he felt his chest clench painfully. He swallowed. Breathed in. And out. Pause. Breathe in. “I-I thought m-my mom was going to c-come back after she l-left to live w-with my dad. Yesterday…” Breathe out. Pause. *Squeeze my hand, kid. It’s alright.* “Yesterday, I r-realized she wasn’t ever c-coming back.”

Kota watched him carefully, then wrapped his little arms around Izuku's middle. They sat quietly for several minutes watching the other students blasting their quirks at maximums. The teen could see Ochaco slowly turning green as she floated a few inches off the ground. Strange noises came from the cave where Tokoyami and Dark Shadow were working. By Sato, a mountain of sweets was stacked as he quickly ate through it and 'muscled-up.'

Izuku and Kota held onto each other. Two lonely souls lost in a sea of endless green.

Chapter End Notes

Hello all! Hope you've had a great couple weeks and are ready for more tragedy—I mean Izuku and Aizawa fluff! We're really starting to get some secrets out! It's so spicy <3

Let me know if you find any typos or anything. I didn't have time to review this before posting, because I wanted to get it out before going to bed, so there may be some issues.

Please enjoy!

Like this story? Like chatting with people who like what you like? Come join my server! We have a growing group of great people there to chat about all things fanfiction and beyond! Link here: https://discord.gg/6vfCJQ88et

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

> PLEASE READ: Several readers found a discrepancy in my writing in this chapter, and that leads to Aizawa realizing things about Izuku in this chapter that he couldn't actually figure out based on the knowledge he has (trying not to spoil). I will be editing this chapter to fix the discrepancy at a later date, but for now the chapter is how it is. Thanks to everyone who helped me realize it was incorrect! Sorry about the confusion.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku wandered aimlessly around the field of students hard at work. Kota, who was his companion all morning, was too tired after lunch to continue without a nap, so Mandalay took him inside to rest. Izuku wasn't sure what to do with himself now. This morning he threw himself into his homework with gusto to keep his mind focussed on something— *anything* —else. But he finished all the students he had planned for the day shortly after lunch. *If I keep going at this rate, I'll be done with all my classmates in the first week of the camp. I suppose I can sit down and figure out the rest of the questions, that way I still have people to talk to for the rest of the time. Shouta won't mind if I'm sitting at the lunch tables for the rest of the day, right? I'll still be working…*

Mind made up, Izuku turned and strode toward the cabin, his green eyes downcast as he clutched his notebook to his chest. His steps were unsteady as he walked without seeing where he was going, his thoughts overshadowing his senses as he moved on autopilot.

A voice that sounded like Kaachan's drifted through his head. *Why even bother? You shouldn't be in the hero course anyway. Why would anyone want* your *opinion on their quirk? Your own mother—*

Izuku tamped down on the errant thoughts. *SHUT UP. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT.*

*What, that mom didn't want you? You already know that—*

*IT DOESN'T MATTER. I DON'T CARE.*

*You do care. Don't lie to yourself.*

Izuku was too lost in his thoughts, struggling to keep from breaking

down, to notice Bakugo approaching him fast from the side. “Deku! Don’t ignore me, nerd!”

The green-haired teen jumped, his heart leaping into his throat as panic gripped him. He wasn’t ready for this, wasn’t prepared. *Don’t go near Bakugo,* Shouta had said. And now, here he was, in his face and yelling. Just like in middle school.

Green eyes blew wide as Bakugo used his superior height to his advantage and leaned over Izuku. The blond’s red eyes glared into his own and he let out a snarl, “What the hell is the old hag saying? Huh?”

Stunned, and too afraid to really process what was happening, Izuku took a step back, which was swiftly mirrored by Bakugo. Stammering, Izuku forced out, “I-I…I d-don’t…”

Bakugo scoffed, rolling his eyes, and pulled out his phone. He pushed it into Izuku’s face, his red eyes frowning at Izuku’s stricken expression. “Tell me what this is about. Now.”

Izuku gasped for air, wide eyes rapidly reading the text message displayed on the screen as he clutched his notebook tightly to his chest. Too tightly. He couldn’t breathe. Or was that the fear causing his lungs to clench? He couldn’t tell.

*Old Lady: I just went to visit Inko, but a whole ass other family was living in their apartment. Ask Izuku if they moved. Inko never said anything about finding a new place.*

Izuku swallowed around the lump in his throat. His home. It was already filled with someone else’s family. He knew this would happen eventually, even tried to be nice and leave his furniture for the next tenants. He just…didn’t think it would happen this quickly. A little over a week? That’s how long he was gone. *A little over a week to forget about me. To fill the void I left behind. Is that how long it took mom? Just a week? A day?* He felt tears filling his wide green eyes as he stared unseeing through the cell phone in Bakugo’s hand. *Or did it take less time for her? Did she forget about me once she was in America? As soon as she landed? Or did she forget as soon as she left the note on the counter and locked the door behind her?*

“Nerd! Answer me, dammit!”

Izuku was brought back to the present by a rough push to his chest. He stumbled backward and fell to the ground. He looked up at Bakugo

standing above him, his mind flashing back to middle school and this exact scene.

*“Hah! As if you could ever get into UA. Don’t even try, deku! I’m the only one getting in from this stupid school!”*

*“Heroes need good quirks, deku. You don’t even have a* bad *quirk, so how can you possibly hope to compete with me?”*

A grunt from the blond teen, and then he crouched down, his glare still in place. “Did you move or some shit? Why the hell didn’t Auntie Inko tell my old hag? Hah?”

A different voice, one that helped soothe Izuku’s frazzled nerves slightly, called out, “Bakugo! It’s unbecoming of a UA student to assault other classmates! I demand you stand down at once!”

*Tenya*. His slow mind supplied as he continued to stare unseeing through the cell phone. The blond leaned back to snarl at the taller boy. “I didn’t assault him! I’m just asking a question. Leave your damn nose out of it.”

Tenya’s voice took a shocked tone, “Such language!”

Izuku’s mind flashed back to his mother’s words.

*“Now honey, would Katsuki say something like that? That’s not nice to say about him. What if someone heard you and it ruined his hero career prospects? Would you want that on your shoulders?”*

*“But mom! He did say it! And he pushed me onto the ground!”*

*Inko stopped her ministrations of the cuts on Izuku’s small hands, her green eyes starting into his sharply. “We talked about this, Izuku. It’s not nice to tell lies. You fell because you were clumsy, remember? No one pushed you. No one called you names.”*

*Izuku’s lower lip trembled as he nodded, his eyes downcast and staring at what remained of his school notebook. The edges were heavily singed, and several pages were completely burnt. But it wasn’t Kaachan’s fault. It was his own. Deku’s fault.*

“Well, deku? You gonna answer me or what?”

Izuku’s eyes came into focus as he felt a welling of *something* fill his stomach. The void inside his chest that was throbbing painfully since

yesterday afternoon suddenly burned with red-hot *anger*.

His green eyes snapped up to meet Bakugo's red ones, and his expression caused the taller teen to step back slightly in surprise. His voice a low hiss, Izuku spat, "She left."

Bakugo's face screwed up in confusion. "What? The hell does that mean, nerd?"

"She left." Izuku said again, his voice like hot iron quenched in water. A sizzle, a hiss. Angry. Furious. Achingly hurt. "She couldn't stand having a deku like me for a son, so she left. She sold everything in the house and left. She's gone. That's why I don't live there anymore. That's why you can't call her phone."

Bakugo's expression ranged from angry, to confused, to shocked. Izuku hadn't ever seen the last expression on his face before. It felt… good. To be in control for once. To have the upper hand.

He pushed himself up and stood, then began to walk away toward the cabin. He could see Tenya staring at him with wide eyes, and Ochaco watching him with concern. Behind him, Bakugo shouted, "There's no way Auntie Inko just up and left! You're lying! Why the hell would she do that?"

Izuku stopped abruptly and turned, wanting to hurl his notebook at Bakugo but restraining himself. *Shouta would disapprove.* "Lying?" He replied, his voice cracking on the word. "What would you know about lying, Kaachan?" He took on a mocking, sickly sweet tone that at once felt so *good* and so utterly unlike him. It sickened him, but he couldn't restrain himself. Not anymore. Not with Bakugo right here. He had to get it out. Had to purge himself of this feeling otherwise he'd hold onto it forever and it would destroy him. So he let go, and said what he always wanted to say. "I've been *lying* for you for years, Kaachan. Every time you pushed me, or hurt me, or insulted me, I had to lie for you. I couldn't 'ruin your hero career,' after all.

"Do you know that's what my mom told me? Your hero career was more important than the scrapes, bruises, and burns you gave me. Your *hero career* was more important than the health of her own *son.* So yes, Bakugo," he spit the name with a venom he didn't know he had. "Yes, she would *absolutely* leave as soon as she was able. She never wanted someone like *me* for a son. She always wanted someone like *you.*"

Izuku felt himself deflate after he finished. The anger receded, leaving

an even bigger hole in his chest than before. As he calmed himself down, breathing through the emotions, he realized almost all of his classmates were watching. Bakugo was still shocked, his red eyes trained on Izuku's face. The rest of his class were shocked too, looking at him in a new light. Izuku turned back to the cabin, feeling tears welling in his eyes again. The brief flash of anger burned like a match. Bright and hot, then gone. Dwindled into a blackened spindle. All that was left was an immeasurable grief. He gripped his notebook tightly to his chest, trying to keep the void from growing. From consuming him.

Izuku walked away. Bakugo didn't stop him. No one stopped him. He passed Ochaco and Tenya. She called out, "Izuku?" He didn't answer, just continued his pace and direction. Tenya's face held a look of realization as he passed, but he didn't say anything. The tall boy simply followed Izuku as he made his way to the cabin, shortly followed by Ochaco, who caught up to Izuku and wrapped her arm around his shoulder. The trio walked silently into the large building, not saying anything.

They let Izuku lead them wherever he wanted. He wasn't really aware of what he was doing, but his feet took him to the bath house. They waited by the door, unsure, until Izuku stripped his shoes and dipped his feet into the warm water. He tossed his notebook to the side and hunched forward. He didn't care that he wasn't alone. He couldn't hold back the tears anymore. He sobbed, warm, salty tears streaming down his cheeks to join the spring water below him. His arms wrapped around his chest tightly.

The soft *plop* of Ochaco's feet entering the water sounded from his right. He didn't stir, even as her arms wrapped around him in a warm hug. His breath hitched at the unexpected contact. On his other side, he could hear Tenya studiously taking his own shoes off and settling down next to him. The three were quiet for several moments while Izuku cried, his chest heaving. Tenya placed his large hand on Izuku's other shoulder, his warm hand grounding the green-haired teen further.

*I said what I wanted to, but I don't feel any better.*

*You should though. You got Bakugo to leave you alone.*

*But he's my friend!*

*Stop kidding yourself, he wasn't ever your friend.*

*Yes, he is!*

*Did he ever comfort you like this?*

*…No…*

*Exactly. These are your friends. Bakugo is not. Never was. Not since you were diagnosed*

*But—*

*No buts. He's not your friend. He's a bully. He hurt you.*

"Do you want to talk about it?" Ochaco's soft voice echoed slightly across the empty space of the bath house. Izuku could feel the vibrations of it through the tight hug she was giving him.

Izuku was torn. He knew talking to Shouta helped. It always did, even if he cried at the end. But it always helped. On the other hand, yelling at Bakugo didn't help. It just made him feel worse. He wasn't sure what to do. But these were his friends. They deserved to know at least, right?

Izuku straightened slightly, feeling Ochaco's arms slip from the embrace and slide down to hold his hand. He would have blushed if he wasn't so wrung out.

"M-my mom…she…she left d-during our internships." He paused, swallowing and wiping at his eyes. "She moved to America to l-live with m-my dad."

Izuku didn't look up at either of their faces, but he could tell by the way they stiffened that they understood what he meant.

Tenya spoke then, his voice low, "Your mother left you…alone?"

Izuku nodded, and felt both Ochaco's hand on his and Tenya's hand on his shoulder squeeze in comfort. He explained the rest of the tale: how his mom sold all the furniture to pay for her ticket, how she just left him with a note and some left overs in the fridge, how he scrounged for money to pay for food, selling his hero merch collection to keep going a few more months.

Ochaco inhaled sharply as he explained the last parts. "Is that why… you didn't have lunch for so long? Because you didn't have any food to bring?"

Izuku nodded sullenly, wiping his still streaming eyes again. The heaving sobs had stopped, but his eyes were still leaking and his breath was still unsteady.

“But then,” Tenya interrupted. “How did you pay for the school meal? If you had no money?”

Izuku removed his hand from Ochaco’s to scrub at his face, embarrassed to admit the next parts. *They need to know. I want them to know. They won’t laugh at me for this, I know.*

“Umm…A-Aizawa-sensei noticed I-I didn’t have lunch, and g-gave me a slip. I g-guess they have a p-program or s-something that lets students g-get lunch for f-free.”

Both of his friends nodded in understanding, then went quiet as if they knew he had more to say. He did, and now that he was letting everything out he realized he couldn’t stop. Hiding his mother’s absence, forging her signature, lying about his emergency contact number. His waning strength. Breaking his arm during the practical exam. The memories were still painful, fresh, but he felt the hole in his chest shrinking as he let it all out. This was what he needed. Not the anger at Bakugo, which just hurt him anew. His friends were sitting here with him. People who liked him for *him*, listening to what he had to say. They didn’t judge, they didn’t question. They just listened.

“After I-I broke my arm, t-that’s when Aizawa-sensei found o-out about m-my mom. T-they couldn’t f-find her to let her kn-know about my injury or s-sign my consent form f-for the surgery. R-Recovery Girl had to d-do it instead.

“Aizawa-sensei asked m-me about it w-when I woke up. He knew s-something was w-wrong already, so I-I couldn’t l-lie to him.” Izuku paused, his mind going over the emotional stay at the hospital. This is where he hesitated. Shouta said he could tell his friends, but did he want them to know all of this? He could just say he was in foster care. That would be explanation enough. But he remembered the odd look Tenya was giving him this morning, the questions Ochaco had yesterday. He sniffed, and continued.

“I-I guess m-most pro heroes have um, an e-emergency f-foster license? S-So, Aizawa-sensei…I’ve b-been living w-with him s-since I got out of the h-hospital.”

Both teens jolted beside him as he admitted his second largest secret,

the first being the truth about his mother. Somehow, voicing the second was harder than the first. Maybe it was because he already yelled the truth at Bakugo earlier, so they already knew. Maybe it was because he didn't feel as if it was his secret to tell, even though he had permission.

"You're living with Aizawa-sensei?" Ochaco gasped, leaning back to get a good look at his face. Izuku nodded quietly, not meeting her gaze. He watched the ripples and steam coming off the hot water as he slowly kicked his feet back and forth. He remembered sitting with Shouta in this same position just yesterday. The comfort it gave him.

"Ah. I suppose that's why he was unconcerned when you weren't in bed last night. You were with sensei?'

Izuku mumbled, "Y-yeah. I n-needed to talk to him, and I f-fell asleep on his couch."

Ochaco asked in a hushed tone, "And he didn't expel you?" She squeaked, her hand coming to cover her mouth. "Sorry!"

Izuku shook his head, a small laugh escaping him, "N-no. He w-wouldn't do that. He's um…" He considered whether he should continue. Did Shouta want his personal details shared? Probably not. "He's…really n-nice," he finished lamely, kicking his feet to distract himself.

"Really? He seems so stern in class though," Ochaco put a finger to her mouth as she frowned. Then, she perked up, "So, what does his house look like? Ashido thinks he lives in a bat cave or something really dark, but that's not true, is it?"

"Ochaco, I don't think that's really necessary—"

"He lives in an apartment," Izuku blurted. "And he has a cat. Her name is Tofu. She's really sweet and funny."

Ochaco's face lit up with a smile. Her voice dropped to a whisper, "Aizawa-sensei has a *cat*? Oh my god, I can totally see it! *Please* tell me you have pictures!"

Izuku laughed and scratched the back of his head. "Y-yeah. They're o-on my phone. I c-can show you l-later?"

"Yes!" Ochaco punched the air while Tenya looked on disapprovingly.

“We shouldn’t pry into Aizawa-sensei’s personal life. He’s our teacher.”

Ochaco waved a hand, “He’s Izuku’s *dad* now, didn’t you hear? That means he’s free game! Besides, I’d tell you about my parents if you asked!”

Izuku’s green eyes widened at Ochaco’s words. *Shouta…my dad? That’s just silly.* But something about the words felt warm and…right? He only lived with Shouta and Hizashi for a little over a week, but already they both were a source of comfort to him. They were people he knew he could go to for help, or just to talk. Did that…make them like parents? He hadn’t felt like this with his mom in so long, he forgot what it was like. He loved his mother, despite everything she did, but it wasn’t warm like this. It wasn’t comforting. It was expected, a habit now more than anything.

*Guardians.* He forced himself to think, pushing the thoughts of dads away. *They’re my temporary guardians, that’s all. Once they find somewhere for me to go, I won’t live with them anymore.* His mind returned unbidden to the conversation he and Hizashi had on the balcony just a few nights ago.

*“As far as I’m concerned, that room is yours forever.”*

Tenya’s strict voice pulled him from his reverie. “Yes, but your parents aren’t our teachers!”

“Are you saying that if one of our classmates was legitimately…I don’t know, Present Mic’s kid, that you wouldn’t ask about him? Your parents are pro heroes too, but we still ask about them!”

The blue-haired boy spluttered, unable to form a response. “That’s—that’s different!”

Ochaco giggled, one hand over her mouth and the other squeezing Izuku’s hand again. “No, it isn’t, Tenya! I just want to know about Izuku’s new dad!” She turned to Izuku, smiling at him brightly. He smiled back, feeling the tightness in his chest relax as they laughed together.

He didn’t tell them everything, Shouta asked him specifically not to mention Hizashi, but he did tell them a few things: his new room, the ramen shop down the road, cuddling with Tofu on the couch, watching old superhero movies with Shouta. The anger from before disappeared completely, replaced by a sense of calm as he let his

friends into his life again. They weren't upset with him for keeping it secret, just supportive. Happy that he was being taken care of, and joking about living with the strict pro hero they called their home room teacher. They promised not to tell anyone else, and for that Izuku was immeasurably grateful. He could not have asked for better friends.

—

Kota and Izuku sat in camp chairs the Wild Wild Pussycats set out for them and watched as the students of Class 1-A ventured into the forest to face their Test of Courage. The game was simple, Class 1-B were out in the woods and their aim was to scare as many of Class 1-A's students as possible as they made their way through the forest to find a piece of paper with their name on it. Then, when all of Class 1-A had either found their name or been scared out of the forest, the two classes would switch.

Izuku hung back from joining in on the game, though Ochaco and Tenya both pleaded with him to join. It was Aizawa who suggested he sit out. Something about 'not adding more stress than you need, kid.' Without him, there was an even number of students anyway. And he didn't think he could convince Kota to venture in as his partner.

So, the two sat in chairs and watched the game unfold, laughing quietly when they heard Kirishima squeal from inside the forest. Asui and Ochaco glanced at each other with trepidation before grabbing hands and striding into the dark trees together. Shortly after, several loud squeals echoed over the trees.

"I like her," Kota mumbled after they stopped giggling, his dark eyes focused on his coloring book. He was adding figures to one of the drawings he completed earlier. Izuku noticed one of the stick figures had bright green hair, and the other had a spiky hat, but didn't mention it.

"Ochaco's r-really nice."

Kota said, "Yeah…" in response, then glanced up at Izuku shyly. "Do you like my picture?"

Izuku looked down at the book. The two stick figures were holding hands as they stood on top of a bright red fire truck. Two green dots stood out in the circle representing his face, and a big smile was plastered on both figures.

“That’s really g-good, Kota-Chan!” He exclaimed, then pointed to a splash of blue coming from Kota’s stick figure hand. “What’s that?”

Kota looked down, then blushed. “It’s my quirk,” he muttered.

“You have a water quirk?” Izuku asked, mind racing. The Water Hose duo both had water-based quirks, so it would stand to reason that their son would as well.

“Yeah,” Kota said, embarrassed. He put away his crayons. “I don’t know your quirk, otherwise I would put it on, too.”

“Oh,” Izuku replied. He bit his lip. “M-my quirk makes me really s-strong. It l-looks kind of like g-green lightning on my skin.”

Kota looked up, eyes bright. “That’s cool sounding!” He grabbed a different green than the one he used for Izuku’s hair and eyes and started scribbling jagged lines across the stick figure’s arms and legs. “Like this?” He held up the drawing again.

Izuku nodded, smiling at the young boy and taking a drink from his Mirko-themed water bottle. He pulled a snack out of the bag of goodies Hizashi gave him, then offered one to Kota. The boy took it happily and settled into his chair as he flipped through his coloring book for a new page to work on.

Izuku turned back to watch the forest, his thoughts wandering. He didn’t see Bakugo again after he yelled at him earlier. At least, not until just a few minutes ago when he stepped into the forest with Kirishima. Honestly, Izuku was avoiding him as much as possible. The blond gave him an odd look before heading into the forest, which Izuku pointedly looked away from, then turned back to the red-head and said something Izuku couldn’t hear. The two disappeared into the dark green foliage and Kirishima could be heard shouting not too long after.

Izuku wondered if Bakugo was angry with him for yelling. He’d never done something like that before. It was so out of character for him to get so angry. He felt like he should apologize, but a small part of him wondered what he would be apologizing for? Everything he said was the truth.

Shouta wasn’t there when he yelled at Bakugo, but Izuku knew he heard about it from the other students. Most of his classmates were shooting him furtive looks at dinner. Izuku tried to ignore them, but it was difficult. Being the center of attention was not his preference, and

if not for Ochaco and Tenya, he might have taken his dinner inside to eat on his cot. All the sets of eyes watching him set him on edge.

Izuku sighed, trying to relax. The camp chair he was borrowing was quite comfortable, and he let himself sink into it while Kota chattered beside him.

“I like the color red. What’s your favorite color? Is it red too? Is that why you have red shoes?”

“I l-like red,” Izuku admitted. “And blue, and yellow.”

Kota eyed the hoodie Izuku wore. “All Might colors?”

Izuku smiled with embarrassment as he looked over at the young boy. “Y-yeah,” he mumbled. He turned back to watch the forest again. His entire class was among the dark trees now, only Mandalay and Ragdoll out in the open overseeing the game. Pixie-Bob and Tiger were patrolling to make sure no one cheated.

Something felt off to Izuku as he watched and listened for his classmates. He could hear Kota’s crayon scratching over his coloring book, and the gentle murmuring of Mandalay and Ragdoll chatting. But he didn’t hear the birds anymore. Didn’t see them fly out of the trees with fright when someone screeched from inside the woods. There were no more shrieks coming from among the tree trunks.

It felt too still. As Izuku frowned and stood to observe the tree line, he saw a cloud of black smoke rising over the tops of the dark pines.

*Something’s wrong*, he thought. His fist clenched tightly as he glanced around, ears and eyes straining for any sign of his classmates. *It’s too quiet. Why can’t I hear them anymore?*

“Kota,” Izuku said warningly. The kid looked up, a curious look in his eye. When he saw Izuku’s concerned expression, his dark eyes went wide.

“What’s wrong?” He asked, dropping his book and crayons to the ground and standing to grasp the fabric of Izuku’s shorts. The green-haired teen pulled him in close as he observed the forest. He saw Ragdoll go stock still, then dash into the foliage. Mandalay turned to look at Kota and Izuku, a gloved hand raised and pointing at the cabin.

“Get inside!” She shouted from across the clearing, her red boots

thumping against the soft grass as she dashed towards them.

“No…” A dark, low voice cooed from behind Izuku. He felt the hair on the back of his neck stand straight up at the chilling and unfamiliar voice. He turned rapidly, pushing Kota behind him as he got into a readied stance, his good arm in front of him to ward off an attack.

A tall man, darkly dressed with chains and piercings all over him smiled cruelly. His black hair stood out starkly against the pale and damaged skin of his face, which was connected to healthy skin by multiple rings. He smirked, blue eyes raking over Izuku’s face. “Midoriya, isn’t it? Why don’t you stay out here with me?”

Izuku flung himself and Kota to the side as a plume of blue fire flared where he was standing. The heat from the jet of flame immediately made him sweat as he grabbed Kota with his good arm and pulled him away from danger. The man laughed, “Oh, this should be fun! Let’s play!”

Another gush of heat roared past Izuku’s ear and he smelled the acrid smell of burnt hair. His face felt warm, even after the fire dissipated. He pushed Kota away from the man, yelling, “Kota! Get inside!” as Mandalay lunged at the heavily pierced villain.

Kota yelped, his large brown eyes wide and dilated as his tiny legs took him toward the cabin. Izuku turned to face where Mandalay was engaged with the dark-haired man. Unsure how to help, but knowing he couldn’t stand by, he sprinted forward.

Mandalay and the man were trading blows, the red-clothed hero glaring in fury at the laughing man as she swiped her clawed gloves at his face.

“Did I make the kitty angry? Ha ha! Come at me then!” A loud roar sounded as a giant plume of blue flame lit up the dark encampment. Mandalay went flying into the air from the attack, only just able to land on her feet as she performed a backflip in midair. The piercing blue eyes that felt so familiar to Izuku turned to look at him.

“If you come quietly with me, Midoriya, I won’t have to kill that cute little kid you were protecting.” He pointed his hand at Kota, who was just about to reach the door to the cabin. “Think hard, now,” he called, a teasing tone to his voice.

Izuku felt every protective instinct he had well up inside him. “I won’t l-let you hurt h-him!” He lunged forward, grabbing at one of the

marshmallow sticks left out from last night. He jabbed the sharp end at the villain, missing by a long shot as the man laughed heartily and dodged.

“F-f-fine by me!” The man jeered, mimicking Izuku’s stutter and igniting his hand. He lobbed the ball of flames over Izuku’s head in Kota’s direction. A high-pitched yelp sounded as Mandalay pulled Kota out of the line of fire.

“Midoriya! Get out of there!” Mandalay yelled as she dodged another fireball with Kota tucked against her chest. He was crying, Izuku could see that clearly in the flashes of light from the bright blue flames.

Heart hammering and breathing fast, Izuku lunged again with the marshmallow poker, hoping to distract the villain for long enough to give Mandalay time to get Kota to safety. The man dodged easily, a smirk across his pierced and damaged face.

“What are you doing, kid? Your arm is busted. And I know you can’t use that fun little quirk of yours. Just give up quietly and no one else gets hurt.”

Izuku wanted to stare at him in shock, but the adrenaline flowing through his body wouldn’t let him stop moving. He continued to dash around, his hard breathing scratching at his throat. His lungs burned. He hadn’t done this much vigorous activity since the practical exam, and even then he ran out of energy too quickly. He may have a week's worth of healthy meals under his belt now, but his strength hadn’t come back yet.

“I won’t let you hurt anyone here!” Izuku examined his surroundings rapidly, his mind analyzing anything he could use to his advantage. The side of the cabin ran parallel to the path of the fight, and the tree line wasn’t too far away from them. *If I can get him toward the trees, that will lead him away from Kota and Mandalay. Then Mandalay can get Shouta and Vlad King to help out. It seems like he wants me for some reason, so that should work.*

Izuku continued dodging fists, kicks, and gouts of flame as he slowly maneuvered them towards the forest. He saw Mandalay running for the remedial course classroom with Kota in her arms.

*How do I keep him busy for long enough? I don’t know how he found out, but he’s right! I can’t use One for All right now, and this poker isn’t going to do much against him. It might even melt under that heat!*

He rolled the the side, wincing as he felt some of the plaster of his cast crush against his arm. It should be mostly healed by now, but he worried about the damage he was doing to it. Rising to his feet again, he watched the flame user for his next attack. The man lunged forward, and Izuku jumped to the side, breathing heavily.

*Wait,* he thought*, my arms are getting tired, but my legs still have strength in them. I didn't lose as much muscle there as I did in my arms from not eating, so maybe…*He dodged another burst of blue fire, his eyes starting to hurt from the constant strain of dilation at the bright light from the flames back to the darkness of the woods.

Making up his mind, Izuku turned into the trees fully, hoping the man wouldn't consider going back for Kota, and leapt between two trunks. The bark of the tall pines was significantly different than the concrete columns Aizawa trained them in, but Izuku found the skills and muscle memory transferred quite well. He kept his breathing deep and even, not allowing himself to panic as he parkoured his way between the trees to dodge the villain's attacks. He heard an annoyed grunt from below him as he scrambled onto a large branch and sprinted across it to another tree.

"I see, so this is how you want to play. Well, if we're playing kids games, ever tried the floor is lava?" The tall, lanky man grinned as he knelt and blue flame spread from his hands across the ground. Pine cones, dried leaves, branches, and long-dead tree trunks ignited instantly, sending a wave of smoke up into the trees Izuku was dashing between. The sudden brightness and heat caused him to misjudge the distance to the next branch. His red-booted foot slipped off the rough bark and he fell hard onto the branch, his free hand scrambling desperately for a grip on the tree.

Izuku hung from the branch, his chest feeling bruised from the rough fall, and his arm shaking from the strain of holding himself up. He tried to push himself up against the tree trunk with his feet, but he was too far away. A whimper escaped his lips unwillingly as he hung over the immense heat below him with only his good arm to keep him from falling.

The darkly-dressed man stood with his hands in his pockets as he surveyed the damage. The fire from his quirk quickly spread throughout the area, turning from the bright blue flames to regular red ones. Blue eyes gazed piercingly up at Izuku as he shrugged. "Guess I went a little overboard. Let me know when you're ready to come down, and I'll stop it. Wouldn't want your friends in the woods

to get caught in this, would you?"

Izuku felt panic clawing at his brain. *Ochaco, Tenya, my classmates! Class 1-B! I can't let them get hurt! They don't know what's happening!* The silence before the start of this attack made him second-guess that thought. *He can't be the only one attacking the camp, but that means… everyone is in danger!*

Izuku struggled to regain a solid foothold on the tree, but only felt his fingers slipping over the branch as the heat caused his hands to sweat. *This is bad*, he thought as his pinky slipped from the branch, his grip not strong enough to hold himself up.

"Come on, kid. Just come quietly, and I'll let you down. No need to get burnt." The man laughed as he looked at Izuku's precarious position. "Or break another limb when you fall. Though I'm sure that would make you a lot easier to handle."

Izuku glanced down at the forest floor covered in red and blue flame. His green eyes were wide with panic as he felt his adrenaline spike. It didn't help him, his arm was still too weak to hold on. He felt another of his fingers give out and his body started to slip downward. *I'm going to break my leg from this height*, he thought. *And the fire is so hot, I'll be roasted for sure.* The firelight flickered against his skin, the heat and smoke rushing up to meet him. He felt dizzy. It was getting difficult to breathe up here, and the panic was taking over. Pine cones below him started to make loud popping sounds as the sap inside them ignited and sent pine seeds flying.

*Pop! Pop pop! POP!* The sweet smell of sap drifted up along with the smoke.

*Bakugo stood above him, grinning. He turned to his two cronies. "Watch this," he crowed as he brought his hand down close to Izuku's exposed calf, sparks igniting and a sickly sweet smell filling the air.*

"No!" Izuku shouted as he reflexively pushed himself away from the memory. His stomach wrenched as gravity pulled him rapidly to the ground, the heat and smoke enveloping him as he dropped.

Chapter End Notes

> Sorry sorry sorry!! Life got busy and I had no time for writing. But! I've taken a week off work in the near future and have nothing more pressing than busting out chapters for this story, so hold onto your butts!

I love writing Hizashi and Shouta texting. It warms my heart and makes me cackle like an old hag. It’s a wonderful thing.

Hope you’re all doing well and please enjoy!

Want to hang out in pure nerd-dom? This fic has a discord! Come say hi! https://discord.gg/6vfCJQ88et

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bakugo and Kirishima walked silently through the forest, both boys watching the trees for any sign of Class 1-B. Bakugo's face creased with a deep scowl, and his hands were shoved deep into the pockets of his jeans. Kirishima's attention was torn between checking for their rival hero classmates and glancing furtively at Bakugo from the corner of his eye.

They walked for several moments, the only sound breaking the silence was screams and yells from the group before and after them as the other class successfully scared them. Finally, Bakugo growled, "What the hell do you keep looking at me for, shitty hair?! Keep your eyes out for those idiots out here!"

Kirishima wasn't normally intimidated by Bakugo's outward aggressiveness, and he wasn't today either. He cleared his throat as his red eyes returned to the woods surrounding them. "So…uh…is it true?"

Bakugo fixed him with a fierce glare, but replied, "What the hell are you talking about?"

"What Midoriya said. Is it true?" Kirishima shrugged, feigning nonchalance. Truth was, watching Mido-bro break down and shout at Bakugo earlier shook a lot of the class, himself included. No one was sure how to act around either of the boys, uncertain if Midoriya was being truthful (though he was normally one for over sharing the truth, not lying about it).

"About his mom? I don't fucking know. Ask him." Bakugo turned back to face the well-worn trail, red eyes scanning the tree line ahead of them. A small crease appeared between his blond eyebrows, and an imperceptible frown slid across his lips.

Kirishima huffed, trying to go about this question delicately. Bakugo was an angry guy, but Kirishima liked him enough to be his friend. He didn't want to burn a bridge by stepping on Bakugo's pride wrong. "I mean about…what Midoriya said about *you,* Bakugo." The red-head stopped walking as he spoke. His interest in the Test of Courage all

but forgotten in the wake of the very serious question.

The blond stopped rigidly. Kirishima could see the tendons in the teen's arms tense as he likely clenched his fists in his pockets. Red eyes pierced a glare as Bakugo angled his head to see Kirishima without turning around. "What." It wasn't a denial. It wasn't exactly a yes, either.

The red-haired teen sighed, realizing his friend wasn't going to be forthcoming, and his attempts at subtlety were not appreciated. He shoved his own hands in his pockets and met Bakugo's eye. Red to red. Immovable object to furious force of nature. "Did you use your quirk to hurt Midoriya before coming to UA? I know you went to middle school together."

Bakugo whirled rapidly and stomped up to Kirishima. "Do you really think they'd let me into UA if I was doing that kind of shit?"

Kirishima backed up slightly, surprised at the sudden burst of agressiveness. "So, Midoriya was lying then?" He didn't really believe it. The Midoriya he knew was timid, honest, and forthright. Why would he lie about something like this, anyway?

"I pushed deku around a little, yeah! Stupid kid needed to realize how dangerous being a hero was going to be. It's not all this stupid frills and rainbows like he thought it was in middle school." Bakugo grunted, turning away and walking further down the path. Kirishima hurried to keep up.

"What the hell, Bakugo! So, you *did* bully him!"

"The hell I did! You don't get it, shitty hair! The bastard was quirk—" Bakugo cut off suddenly, his whole body going rigid as he froze in the middle of the path. Kirishima, who was hot on his tail, crashed into him and they both stumbled.

"Hey! What the—!" Kirishima exclaimed as they regained their balance. Bakugo shot him a look and pulled his finger across his lip in a zipping motion, then pointed forward along the path. Confused, and still reeling from their conversation, Kirishima turned to look.

A man wearing a skin-tight suit made up of black leather and tightened straps was crouched in the center of a patch of moonlight on the dirt path. Both boys watched, horrified, as the strange person gently rocked forward and backward, muttering to himself.

“So pretty…I need more…more! Such a pretty color…”

The teens turned their gaze to the ground, where the man appeared to be staring. A severed hand lay in a pool of blood.

“B-Bakugo?” Kirishima muttered. “Which group was ahead of us again?”

Bakugo, repulsed by the scene in front of them, didn’t answer as a woman’s voice echoed through their heads.

“Students of UA! Villains have infiltrated the camp! Make your way back to the cabin immediately! Eraserhead has authorized use of your quirks to protect yourselves!”

Kirishima stepped backwards, his face turning pale as he realized who the man in front of them must be. He grabbed Bakugo’s wrist and pulled him back the way they’d come, trying not to make a sound.

“So pretty…maybe…maybe I can get more…from you?” The man suddenly leapt backwards, thin sheets of metal blades flying at the two teens from his mouth.

Both students yelled, “Shit!”

—

Ochaco walked next to Tsu, her arms wrapped around her middle as if to ward off the cold air and soothe her nerves. Tsu hobbled along beside her, no sign of fear on her face as she examined the trees around them.

“Do you think they forgot about us?” Tsu questioned, her long, frog-like fingers scratching at her dark green hair.

“I don’t know,” Ochaco replied, watching the trees. “I thought they might be more scary than this. Everyone else was screaming before.” She shivered, goose pimples rising on her arms and neck. It certainly felt spooky. There was just no sign of Class 1-B in the dark woods. “Maybe they got bored?”

Tsu shrugged, her wide eyes content as they strolled along the dirt path. The night air was starting to develop a light fog. Ochaco shivered, rubbing her arms to keep warm. “I should have brought a jacket,” she laughed. “I’m super chilly! I’m surprised *you’re* not having more trouble with it.” She scanned the woods to her left as she waited

for Tsu to reply.

There was no answer. Ochaco turned to look at the other girl, but didn't find her friend beside her. Wide brown eyes scanned the surrounding area with worry as she whirled around. Everything around her seemed hazy, and she started to cough heavily. She pulled her pink shirt over her nose as she squinted through the purple mist that now covered the trail. She didn't think anyone in Class 1-B *had* a quirk like this!

"Tsu?" She coughed, swinging her arm through the mist to clear a path as she walked back toward camp. She couldn't see, and it was becoming hard to breathe through the fog. She stepped forward and felt something squishy under her foot. She gasped, then coughed. Stinging brown eyes squinted to see what she stepped on, and cried out when she saw it was Tsu's ponytail. "Tsu!" She crouched down immediately, checking for breathing and only feeling slightly better when she felt the shallow puffs against her hand.

"Oh my goodness! You two are just adorable, aren't you?"

Ochaco froze, not recognizing the voice behind her. She grabbed hold of Tsu's wrist and turned to see which of Class 1-B's students it was. Her eyes widened in fear when they landed on the short girl in a tan sweater that she didn't recognize.

The girl grinned behind her mask, her cheeks round like apples and her yellow eyes shining with happiness. "Still awake? That's okay! It's more fun if we can play first." She lifted a knife to her face and ran the flat of the blade along her cheek in a strange kind of caress. Then she dashed forward with such speed Ochaco was hard-pressed to dodge out of the way.

Adrenaline pumping hard, the brown-haired girl rolled up onto her feet after dashing to the side. She coughed against the thick purple fog, eyes straining to see anything in the miasma. A gentle swirl of mist was her only warning as the crazed girl swiped at her again with the knife, this time nicking her arm. Ochaco let out a cry as blood started dribbling down to her elbow, then ducked as silver flashed at her head.

"This is so fun! And you're so pretty with that blood on you! We should make some more!" The blond girl giggled with glee as she danced through the mist. Ochaco squeezed her shirt tight over her mouth as she strained to get enough oxygen. She stayed in a ready

stance, though, waiting for the chance to disarm the other girl.

“Is your name Ochaco? I thought I heard that cute green girl say it earlier. What a cute name! Ocha-chan!” The girl disappeared in the fog, leaving only a swirl behind her. Ochaco was tense, every muscle ready to engage at any second. It was silent for several moments. Brown eyebrows furrowed, the UA student grew more and more concerned as another attack never came. Suddenly fearful, she turned to where she thought Tsu was still lying.

A loud female voice, which she recognized as Mandalay’s, echoed through her head. “Students of UA! Villains have infiltrated the camp! Make your way back to the cabin immediately! Eraserhead has authorized use of your quirks to protect yourselves!” Ochaco’s heart thudded against her chest. She had to get Tsu out of here.

From the frog-quirk girl’s direction, she heard a quiet, “Suck suck. Suck suck.”

Ochaco felt her vision starting to blur as she struggled to breathe, but she still dashed forward, knowing that whatever this girl planned for Tsu wasn’t good. Her forward movement swirled the mist enough that she could see the outline of Tsu on the ground with a large syringe in her leg. A red line of tubing led from her friend to some sort of container on the blond girl’s back.

Ochaco didn’t think. She lunged for the crazy girl, her hand reaching for the knife and twisting the thin wrist backward until she was forced to drop it.

“Ow!” The blond cried as she was slammed to the ground by Ochaco, her mask askew from the force. Ochaco coughed harshly as braced one arm across the girl’s neck while her other hand desperately held her sleeve across her own face. She couldn’t breathe. The yellow eyes of her adversary wavered in her vision as she struggled to remain conscious.

“Ochaco, you’re so lovely!” The girl cackled, coughing slightly as she couldn’t avoid breathing in the fumes. “You know you’ll pass out first!” Her hand reached for the knife, but it was too far out of reach

Uraraka glared down at the smiling face and sharp teeth of the crazy girl, her determination strong. “I…won’t let you…hurt her!” She choked, pushing harder down with satisfaction as the blond winced.

“You won’t have a choice!” She licked her teeth with a hungering look

as she took another syringe and plunged it into Ochaco's calf. Uraraka winced, but otherwise didn't react. Her air was too precious to waste on gasping.

"Won't this be lovely, Ocha-Chan? I bet your blood tastes so sweet! Just like you! I just love your face. I can't wait to wear it myself!"

Uraraka was shaking as she held herself upright, her head light and airy. It didn't matter how much she filled her lungs, unconsciousness threatened to overtake her at any moment. But she pushed against it with everything she had.

*I have to protect Tsu! You can do this, Uravity!*

Yellow eyes smiled kindly up at her as her own started to slip shut, and the vampire girl reached up to affix the toothy mask as Uraraka's arm across her throat went limp.

A torrent of ice shot across the trail and encased the villain's arm before she could secure her air filter. She blinked owlishly at her frozen arm before growling, "No fair!"

"Uraraka! Asui!" A girl with a long, black ponytail rushed forward with a gas mask over her face. Dark eyes took in the scene with concern as she dashed to Tsu with one mask and tossed another over near Uraraka. Todoroki, multi-colored eyes glaring at the villain stuck in his ice, helped Ochaco slip the filter over her face and start the flow of fresh air. The brown-haired girl gasped, and immediately pulled the syringe out of her leg. She noted with concern that two of the containers on the vampire's back were nearly full.

Todoroki flashed another blast of ice and completely immobilized the villain as she struggled. "That should keep you still until you pass out." He glared at her, then helped Uraraka to her unsteady feet.

Ochaco turned slowly to look at Tsu, who appeared to be completely unconscious. Yaoyarozu was applying a bandage to the deep hole from the syringe and rearranging Tsu's limbs so she was more comfortable. The intelligent girl looked up, eyes relieved that Uraraka was still standing.

"Thank god, you're okay. Have you seen anyone else? I'm trying to get masks to everyone that I can."

Ochaco shook her head, coughing inside the mask to expel the last of the toxic fog. "N-no, we haven't seen anyone else. What's going on?"

Todoroki stepped forward to catch more masks as Yaoyarozu created them. “Villains, like Mandalay said. We just saw Kendo and Tetsutetsu from 1-B. I think they’re trying to find out where this fog is coming from, but that’s not the only problem.” He pointed further up the trail. “There’s a huge forest fire to the south, and I think I saw some of the same at the cabin. We might be trapped out here if it spreads far enough.”

Yaoyarozu nodded as she handed Uraraka several bandages. “We need to keep moving. I think it’s best if we leave *her* ,” her dark eyes glared at the complaining girl stuck to the ground by ice, “and try to find everyone else. If we can’t find anyone, we head back to the cabin.”

Uraraka nodded. She pointed further along the path. “Bakugo and Kirishima were ahead of us. I heard Kirishima earlier, before the fog, but I haven’t heard anything since.”

Todoroki eyed the dark path and the faint blue light beyond it, then nodded, his eyes serious. He ducked down to pick up Tsu, but Ochaco stopped him. “You’re more useful in a fight, and if we hit fire, you can make a path for us. I’ll take her.” He looked like he wanted to argue, then saw reason. Ochaco made Tsu weightless with her quirk, though she felt a twinge of queasiness from all the training earlier that day.

The three looked back at the struggling girl who was coughing wildly on the ground with distaste. “Let’s go,” Ochaco said, turning to hurry up the path with Tsu floating behind her, Todoroki and Yaoyarozu in pursuit.

—

Shoji dodged behind a thick tree as Dark Shadow roared behind him. He winced at the sound, his advanced hearing picking up every nuance of Dark Shadow’s anger and Tokoyami’s struggle for control.

“No…! Dark Shadow! Calm yourself!”

Shoji crouched to hide behind a string of bushes. He crawled forward to another tree as the enormous bird lunged across the clearing it made in its fury. A pine to his left snapped and splintered under the might of Dark Shadow’s claw. Shoji winced again. He long ago removed his duplicated ears, but the sounds were so loud even his regular senses were assaulted. His arm throbbed where a duplicated hand was cut off earlier, and he only hoped the bleeding would stop once his heartbeat dropped below 100.

“I—Can’t! Shoji, leave me!” Tokoyami’s strained voice echoed across the clearing.

Creating extra eyes to find a new spot to hide, Shoji ignored the command from his friend. There was no way he was leaving, not with villains roaming the forest and Tokoyami in a vulnerable state. Dark Shadow threw the top of a tree in his general direction, and Shoji lunged forward to avoid the wooden shrapnel. Panting hard, he dashed for a large rock outcropping, dipping and diving to avoid being seen as best he could.

Dark Shadow was out of control. He had an arm cut off. And villains were attacking the camp. Could the situation get any worse? Shoji didn’t know what to do, where to go. He was chased so far into the woods by Dark Shadow that he didn’t know which direction the camp was anymore.

He gasped for breath as the monstrous bird slashed away at several trees to his right, its body writhing in agony and rage.

“Dark Shadow! You must calm down!”

The shadow didn’t react, only screeching and crushing several rocks underfoot. Shoji gave himself a moment to pause. Dark Shadow seemed to lose him for now, but it wouldn’t be long before he was found again. He had to think. Nothing except bright light could allow Tokoyami to bring Dark Shadow under control again, but it was nearly midnight by his reckoning.

Maybe if he could find Bakugo or Todoroki, they could help. Both of their quirks were incredibly bright and required almost nothing of them to produce. That could work. But where were they?

Shoji grew several ears and more eyes to spread across his dupli-arms. The rock was large enough to cover most of his large body, but several appendages stuck out as he tried desperately to scout. He only hoped Dark Shadow wasn’t looking in this direction.

There. A light in the distance. Fire, by the flickering quality of it. Todoroki? No. The flames were *blue* . It must be part of the villain's attack. But, if he couldn’t find either of his classmates, it may be his only hope. He kept searching, ears straining against the roars of Dark Shadow behind him.

What was that? A tree shattering? A rock crushed under Dark Shadow? No. An explosion.  Bakugo! Shoji made up his mind in an

instant. He dashed forward, hearing Dark Shadow raging behind him.

“Attack!” The bird hissed as it followed.

Shoji ran, his well-muscled legs burning as he rushed through the trees toward the *pop pop crack boom!* of Bakugo’s quirk. As he moved forward, the explosions grew louder and were joined by the *shing shing* of metal slicing through the air. He knew the sound of every one of his classmates' quirks, and he didn’t recognize this one. *A villain* .

He burst through the trees onto the dirt path, feeling a moment of shame that he was so close to it this whole time. Before him, he saw Bakugo and Kirishima doing their best to avoid a multitude of bladed attacks. Bakugo’s face was infuriated, his explosions large in his rage.

“DIE, BASTARD!” He yelled as he let loose an explosion close to the villain in the black straight jacket. The villain yelled back with a hint of insane laughter as he blocked the attack with a shield of metal blades inexplicably grown from his teeth. Kirishima raised his quirk-hardened arms to ward off the flurry of blows raining down from the man.

Shoji continued sprinting forward. He yelled out to his two classmates, “Kirishima! Bakugo! Get out of the way!” Behind him, he heard Dark Shadow scream out a roar as it crashed through the trees in a frenzy. Kirishima glanced behind him, red eyes widening in terror as the monstrous bird leapt onto the trail. Bakugo ignored him, blasting up into the air to attack the villain once more.

Dark Shadow leaped through the trees at the first thing it saw, which was Bakugo’s explosions. “Kill the light!”

Bakugo’s red eyes widened and he dropped out the air as the ink-black bird slashed at him. The blade-toothed villain hissed at the new enemy, his blades blasting toward the bird. Dark Shadow backhanded him without so much as a second thought as it lunged toward Bakugo. The villain was sent crashing into a tree, where he slumped to the ground, unconscious.

Kirishima stared agog at the villain he and Bakugo were struggling against not thirty seconds ago. Shoji ignored his stunned expression and shouted up at his classmate. “Bakugo! Make some light! We have to contain Dark Shadow!”

The blond appeared to snort in derision, but complied with the request. A volley of fireballs rocketed around Dark Shadow and it

roared.

“Keep—Going!” Tokoyami yelled as sweat from the strain of containing his quirk dripped down his face. Bakugo didn’t relent, a torrent of fire lighting the area until the shadow bird shrunk into Tokoyami once more.

Shoji panted, arms braced on his knees as relief washed through him. Kirishima yelled, “Tokoyami! Dude! That was amazing!”

Tokoyami, sweat dripping down his beak as he leaned heavily against a tree, shook his head. “I should have…never lost…control. I am most ashamed.” He glanced up at Shoji, “I am sorry, my friend.”

Shoji waved the apology off with a wave of his hand. “No need to apologize. This is a stressful time for everyone.” He turned to Kirishima and Bakugo. “You heard Mandalay?” At their nods, he continued, “Then we should head back to camp. There’s a fire blocking us in from the south that doesn’t look like Todoroki’s doing. There are likely more villains out here.”

“Good,” Bakugo grunted as he cracked the knuckles on both hands. “More bastards to crush into the ground.”

—

Ochaco huffed heavily as she followed Yaoyarozu and Todoroki down the large dirt path. She made Tsu weightless with her quirk, but the nausea was quick to slow her down, along with the difficulty breathing through the mask.

“I was sure they weren’t far ahead of us!” Ochaco called forward. “They must’ve continued along the trail when Tsu and I were attacked!”

Momo nodded in agreement, “Or they already headed back and got caught in the gas! We should circle back to—“ She cut herself off as the purple haze around them suddenly disappeared. All three looked around in confusion as the area cleared immediately.

“Kendo and Tetsutetsu must have found the villain responsible,” Todoroki guessed, taking off his mask and testing the air. “It’s breathable.”

Uraraka and Yaoyarozu followed suit, but Momo cautioned, “We should hold onto them still, in case it comes back.”

Todoroki nodded, then frowned as he gazed along the path. “Do you hear—?” A roar echoed across the trees, and they saw multiple pines topple over. Several explosions of light followed after.

“That must be them!” Ochaco shouted, bolting forward. The other two followed suit, chasing the sound of crashing trees and shouts. Suddenly everything went quiet. Ochaco felt fear grip her gut again. Were they okay? What happened? They kept running. There was no other option, really. If Bakugo and Kirishima were hurt, they needed to help. If they were alright, better chances with greater numbers.

The four of them turned the last corner, ready to spring into action should villains be waiting for them, but they found themselves crashing into Kirishima and Shoji instead.

Ochaco narrowly missed slamming her nose into the back of Yaoyarozu’s head as they slid to a sudden halt. Kirishima and Todoroki both rubbed their foreheads as they picked themselves up off the ground.

Bakugo scoffed behind them, “Tch. Nerds. Get up already.”

“You’re all okay!” Ochaco exclaimed, looking them over. Shoji looked haggard, and her brown eyes bugged at the blood coating one of his dupli-arms. “What happened? What was that noise?”

Tokoyami ducked his head. “I apologize. Dark Shadow became too powerful and agitated to control.”

Shoji patted him once on the back. “But you defeated that villain, so it’s alright.” He turned to face Uraraka’s group. “What about you? Are you alright?”

Ochaco took a moment to explain what had happened, then took stock of how many there were. “We have eight of us here. I haven’t seen anyone else from our class, have you?”

Shoji and Kirishima shook their heads in the negative. Uraraka nodded, “There were four of us with Aizawa for the extra classes, and Izuku didn’t do the Test of Courage. That should leave seven more of Class 1-A out here.”

Momo piped up, “Aoyama was taking Hagakure and Jiro back to camp. And I think the rest were already through the forest path for the most part.”

“We should head back then,” Todoroki grunted. “We’re likely the last ones out here.”

“You probably should have gone back a lot sooner,” a deep, but feminine voice called out as Bakugo went flying behind Uraraka and Todoroki. He yelled as a quirk sent him rocketing toward a tall, broad woman holding a large metal rod and a grinning lizard man wielding an enormous sword. The villain readied her weapon to strike as Bakugo rushed towards her, a smirk on her wide, red lips. Her muscular arms tensed to swing, biceps bulging against her orange overshirt.

A torrent of ice knocked into both intruders, cutting the woman’s concentration and enraging the lizard.

“You little brat! Big Sis Magne was going to hit a home run!” He leapt to his feet, drawing his sword and fanning out the multitude of blades that made up the weapon. “I’ll just have to cut your pathetic life short in Stain’s name!”

The students of Class 1-A, already running on adrenaline and ready for a fight, dashed forward to engage the two villains.

“Bakugo! Get out of the way!” Todoroki yelled as he sent another wall of freezing ice at their adversaries. The lizard swordsman jumped over the attack, somersaulting and landing on his feet to deliver a blow at Yaoyarozu, who created a shield on her arm to block the attack.

Bakugo blasted himself into the air, growling loudly, “Don’t tell me what to do, Icy-Hot! I can take care of myself, dammit!”

The broad woman activated her quirk, a strange light surrounding the metal rod she held, and surged it forward into the ice, shattering it before it could make impact. Shards of frozen crystals littered the trail behind her as she laughed. “Your attacks are useless against my magnetism! Nothing is stronger than pure force!”

Uraraka released her quirk on Tsu and rushed forward, fingers running along every shard of ice she could and throwing them into the air. Yaoyarozu and Shoji engaged the lizard samurai, the dark-haired girl focusing on defense while Shoji provided the offense. Tokoyami hesitated, a chill running up his spine at the thought of releasing Dark Shadow once more. Uncertain of himself, he dashed to protect Asui’s limp form at the back of the battle.

“Spinner! Keep those two busy!” The villain woman grinned at

Todoroki and Bakugo as they pushed the assault. “I’ve got these two right where I want them.” She pushed a thick arm out and activated her quirk. A blue light surrounded both Todoroki and Bakugo, who were running side-by-side, and the two boys went flying in opposite directions.

Todoroki managed to avoid contact with Spinner’s large weapon as he created a glacial slide to break his fall. Bakugo flipped end-over-end until he righted himself with a blast of his quirk. He yelled, “Bastard! You came to the wrong neck of the woods!”

Both villains grinned viciously as they continued the fight. Magne replied, “You’re the one they call Bakugo, aren’t you? You’re just as aggressive as they said you were!”

The blond’s red eyes filled with rage as he launched himself at the magnet villain, yelling, “DIE!” A loud *BOOM* echoed across the trees.

At that moment, Uraraka yelled, “Release!” Thousands of icy shards rained down on the woman, who cried out in pain at the tiny cuts lacerating her arms.

“No!” Spinner shouted, leaping forward and performing a spin attack that deflected the majority of the frozen projectiles. Yaoyarozu and Shoji pressed the advantage, moving in on the reptile as Momo pulled two swords from her arms.

“Shoji! Here!” She tossed the larger one, more akin to a broadsword than the short sword she wielded herself, and hurried forward to slash at the unguarded villain. They brought their swords down on his unprotected back, but found themselves pulled together harshly, their swords yanked out of their hands and slammed into Magne’s metal rod so hard they almost melded with it. Yaoyarozu gasped at the impact, the pain in her shield arm growing with each passing moment. Her shield was attracted to the metal as well, but the straps on her arm prevented it from flying to meet her swords. An intense tug-of-war began between pure magnetism and flesh.

“That’s enough from you two. Die, in the name of Stain!” The lizard smirked, blade whirling as he spun toward them. His muscular arms brought the weapon down in an arc that would have sliced off both their heads if not for the pillar of ice that blocked it. Todoroki slid past, flinging knives of frozen water at the samurai. The lizard brought his over-large weapon to bear, the crystal daggers plinking harmlessly off the hard metal as Todoroki slipped past and back

towards Magne.

Bakugo came in for another attack on the magnet villain, both hands pressed together as the tell-tale *pop-pop POP* of his quirk ignited his nitroglycerin sweat. The broad woman smirked, then aimed her attack. The boy was powerful, but too forward with his attacks. It left him predictable. She launched her magnetic rod at the explosive blond, the faint aura she saw around anything magnetic igniting into brilliant colors as the rod's magnetism aligned to Bakugo. It rushed up to meet him, following even as he dodged out of the way. The metal collided with Bakugo's chest, winding him and sending him flying toward the bird-beaked boy in the back of the fight.

Uraraka and Todoroki engaged the tall woman as Shoji and Yaoyarozu stood to fend off Spinner's attacks. The fight raged for several moments with neither side giving in. Tokoyami watched from the back after making sure Bakugo would be fine. The teen just gave him the finger when he tried to help, so he returned to protecting Asui from the shards of ice that continued to blast in every direction when Todoroki's frozen walls were shattered.

Tokoyami ducked his head as another wave of crystalline shards dug into the ground beside him, then glanced over at the winded Bakugo. The blond wasn't there. Surprised at his classmate's tenacity after being battered quite soundly, the bird-quirk boy turned back to the battle at hand to watch the angry teen engage again.

He wasn't there either. Confusion washed over Tokoyami's mind as his stomach clenched tightly. His quick gaze surveyed the fight, searching for any sign of his classmate. He wasn't anywhere to be seen. Tokoyami stood, eyes wide with panic. He turned to the sky, sure Bakugo would be preparing an attack from above again. *He wasn't there* .

"Shoji!" He called, a hint of fear in his voice. "Where is Bakugo?"

The reconnaissance hero student glanced back at his friend with a frown as he dodged several swipes of Spinner's sword. He flipped backward, landing in a runner's ready position, then examined the field of battle while Yaoyarozu took the offensive with Uraraka. If his duplicated eyes could go wide, they would have.

"I don't know!" He called back, launching forward to assist Todoroki, who was making no headway against the magnet villain despite his intense attacks. His right side was beginning to frost over as the battle

waged.

Tokoyami stood, cupping his hands around his mouth to shout, “Bakugo!” His dark eyes scanned the trees around them as his ears strained for any sound. Nothing. Bakugo was gone.

A twig behind him snapped, and his eyes fixed themselves upon a strangely dressed figure leaning against the trunk of a tall pine. The man wore a yellow trench coat with a tall, dark top hat. A red feather adorned it. His face was covered by a white mask with black markings resembling a face, and he held a cane in one hand while he twirled a marble between his fingers with the other. The man seemed to notice Tokoyami staring at him, and laughed lightly. “Surprised? I’ve been here for quite awhile.” He flashed the marble at him between his index and middle finger. In the tiny glass Bakugo’s curled up form was revealed.

The man’s face wasn’t visible, but Tokoyami could hear the satisfied smile behind his words. “Could you point me to where the Midoriya boy is? I’m afraid he has a date with the devil that I would *hate* for him to miss.”

—

Izuku’s stomach flew up into his throat as his strained fingers lost their grip on the only thing preventing him from third-degree burns. His green eyes went wide as he let out a yelp that seemed to last for eternity. The heat against his back grew hotter and hotter as the moments ticked by, until his body slammed against a hard surface.

He shut his eyes, prepared for the agony of flames licking at his clothes, but felt nothing. Confused, he peeked one eye open, then both as he realized he was floating several feet off the ground on a round, red disk. Hearing a scuffle from the direction of the cabin, his head snapped up to look.

Vlad King was engaged in a battle with the flame-quirk user, and Shouta was flying through the branches towards him with a wild look in his eye.

“Kid! Are you alright?” He landed on the solid disk of Vlad King’s blood, then scanned him rapidly.

“I-I’m fine,” Izuku winced as he pressed himself up. The back of his head throbbed from the sudden landing, but he was grateful to not be lying in the red-hot flames below. Seeming to calm slightly, Shouta

ruffled his hair, though the movement was more strained than normal.

“Come on,” the pro ordered, standing and pulling Izuku with him. He looped an arm around Izuku’s thin waist before his capture scarf shot out into the night, pale grey against the bright blue and yellow light of the fire below.

Izuku held onto the man’s shoulders as best he could, but his good arm had little-to-no strength left. It shook against Shouta’s chest as they flew through the forest. They landed at the edge of the tree line where the fire hadn’t quite spread to. Aizawa dropped him off, then pointed to the cabin. “Get inside, now!”

Izuku didn’t even think to disobey the tone of his guardian’s voice. It was strained, but focused. Like he sounded at the USJ. Shouta was Eraserhead at this moment, and no one else. The teen stumbled toward the cabin on shaking legs. Eraserhead sprinted back toward the flames, his scarf shooting out to latch onto a tree branch. His momentum carried him into the fight between Vlad King and the flame villain, and he came in with a ferocious kick to the man’s abdomen, knocking him sideways and into the air.

The green-haired teen dashed into the classroom where his classmates and Kota were fortified against the villain attacks. Mandalay was nowhere to be seen. Kota rushed forward, “Izu-chan!” Tears welled in his eyes as he grasped at Izuku’s shorts. The teen dropped to his knees to give the child a comforting hug. His green eyes scanned over the rest of his classmates and the one student, Monoma, from Class 1-B. All had fear written across their faces as they watched the battle outside.

“It’s a-alright, Kota-chan!” Izuku assured him. “Eraserhead and Vlad King won’t let anything happen to us, okay?”

Kota started crying as Izuku held him, and the teen remembered how he felt after their first villain attack. His class’ confidence at the USJ kept them all going during the attack, but afterward…Izuku couldn’t remember a time he felt more scared than when he was alone in his room, crying that night. He squeezed Kota tighter, and stood, his arms shaking. He walked them both over to a corner of the room and sat down, cuddling Kota in close. The boy was breathing fast, terrified. Izuku did his best to calm him as the rest of his class watched the two pros fighting through the windows.

“It’s okay…e-everything is going to b-be fine…” He wasn’t sure if he was assuring Kota or himself as he felt the tell-tale signs of panic spreading through his chest. He started counting his breaths out as Kota shook against him.

Several moments passed, dotted with several cheers or groans from the other UA students in the room as they watched the pro’s at work. Eventually, it seemed that their teachers won out as Ashido screeched, “Ew! The villain turned into mud!”

Sato called back, “I thought his quirk was the blue fire?”

The door opened as Eraserhead and Vlad King entered the room again, both breathing hard.

“Vlad,” Eraserhead called, “You stay here and protect the students. I’ll go find the ones still out in the woods and bring them back.”

“Eraser, there could be more—“

“Of course there’s more,” the pro glared unimpressed at the Blood Hero. “The rest of the students would be back by now if there wasn’t. Mandalay should be able to relay the students’ positions once she meets up with Ragdoll. I need to be out there to collect them.”

Vlad King nodded, a serious set to his square jaw as Aizawa turned to leave the room. Izuku watched the dark-haired man go with trepidation. He wished the man could stay, but he squashed that feeling down harshly. *He has to save the rest of the class. You can’t keep him all to yourself for a little panic attack when your friends could be in danger!*

Izuku swallowed heavily at the thought. Both Ochaco and Tenya were out there somewhere, fending off crazed villains. And he was here, cowering in a corner like a baby. Several tears dripped down his cheeks as he rubbed Kota’s back. *Useless. Worthless. Deku.*

Vlad calmed the rest of the class quickly, ordering them all to sit down again. He took sporadic trips outside to scan for any students making their way back. After several minutes, he returned with Tenya, Ojiro, Mineta, and Koda in tow. Izuku’s stomach eased as he saw his friend sustained no injuries.

Tenya approached him quickly. “Izuku! Were you injured?”

Izuku shook his head, still rubbing Kota’s back. The child was calmer

now, but refused to leave Izuku's lap. "A villain a-attacked us here, I got c-caught in the middle of it, but I'm not h-hurt."

Tenya nodded, his face relaxing from his tense expression. He sat down next to Izuku, crossing his legs precisely and watching the rest of their class. "I worry for Ochaco. She was still on the trail when we got Mandalay's message. That she hasn't returned yet bodes ill."

Izuku clenched his teeth to keep from sobbing. *She could be hurt right now, bleeding out in the woods. And what are you doing? Sitting here. Hiding.* He nodded. "I hope she's alright."

"Hey! Is that Aizawa-sensei?" Kaminari pointed through the window to a dark silhouette by the tree line.

"It must be!" Ashido replied, getting closer to the window for a better look. "Does he have anyone with him?"

Izuku stood, his nerves frazzled to the point that he welcomed any happy sight. He wasn't sure when Shouta became that for him, but he pushed the thought out of his mind. Kota slipped from his lap as he stood, but refused to let go of his hand as they hurried to the window. They all watched as the figure slowly made its way closer to the cabin.

Something was off, Izuku could tell. Shouta was a strong man, but he was ultimately quite thin for a pro hero. He had nothing like Vlad King's or All Might's bulk. The figure approaching the cabin was taller and wider than Vlad King, and as his cloak slid to the ground, Izuku saw his biceps were nearly as big as All Might's.

Kota stood on a chair to see through the window. They both watched together as the students began to realize that the approaching figure wasn't their teacher, nor any of the Wild Wild Pussycats. Beside him, Kota's hand clenched tightly in his as he pushed himself close to Izuku's side. The man's face passed through a brief flash of light from the flames, and the students went rigid. The bulky man had a giant scar across the left side of his face, and where his eye should be was a metal contraption with a red glowing pupil in the middle.

"It's him…" Kota whimpered as Vlad King ordered them all to get back. "He's the one…who killed my parents!"

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry please don't murder me!

But I’m not really sorry, so slay me in the comments mwahahahah!

So um, this chapter hurt me to write. Especially since I know what’s coming next. 0_0 We’re really getting into the thick of things now, and I’m sorry but comfort time has to wait! The plot has no time for it! *hides*

—

Want to chat with people who also like being emotionally hurt by BNHA authors and what they do to poor Izuku? Come join my discord server! We chat about this fanfic, suggest good fanfics to read, and just chat about…stuff. Yeah. Pretty cool. Here’s the link! https://discord.gg/6vfCJQ88et

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Violence and language (Bakugo's damn mouth)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku's ears rang with a tinny whine. Rubble rained down on his back and dust settled in his hair as he squeezed Kota tightly against his chest. The six-year-old was terrified, he could tell by the rapid breathing against his shirt, but he couldn't hear Kota's cries over the loud ringing in his ears.

Once the rubble stopped coming down, he leapt to his feet, adrenaline surging to push him away from the source of the impact. Green eyes squinted against the dust hanging thickly in the air as he stumbled over concrete, wood, and mangled desks. Around him, he spotted a few of his classmates standing groggily. They too stumbled away from the gaping hole in the side of the cabin.

Izuku and Kota reached the back of the room first. Izuku's good arm wrapped tightly around Kota's tiny body as he crouched down next to the unconscious home room teacher of Class 1-B.

"Sensei!" He yelled, though his own voice seemed muted and warped. The pro didn't stir. A line of blood dripped from beneath the man's white hair and the corner of his mouth. Izuku reached out to shake the hero, hoping he was simply stunned and not unconscious entirely. Vlad King grunted groggily, coughing up dust and blood. His usually serious eyes took in the scene with confusion, then sharpened.

"Midoriya!" He coughed, standing shakily from his prone position against the rubble. "Get everyone away from here!" He dashed forward, though Izuku could see a slight limp in his gait, and engaged the bulky villain in combat. Izuku took several minutes to process the order through his sluggish mind and muted ears, then pulled Kota close again and stood.

Tenya, who heard Vlad King's order as well, was already shepherding their classmates through the wreckage and toward the forest. "Follow me! Get everyone out of the rubble!"

Izuku stumbled past Sato, who was lifting a large log off Ashido's legs. She cried out in pain as Kaminari helped her stand, and, together,

they limped after Tenya. Behind the line of fleeing students, the sounds of intense combat boomed.

“You’re stronger than you look, hero. But you can’t possibly keep this up for long. There’s only so much blood you can lose!”

A loud crunch, followed by a grunt from the muscular villain, echoed across the wreckage of the cabin. “I’ll lose however much it takes to keep my students safe!”

The villain laughed, wiping blood from a cut on his arm. He charged forward, the muscles in his thighs expanding to enormous proportions as he powered up to leap at Vlad King.

Izuku turned away from the fight, his tired legs carrying him and Kota toward the relative safety of the trees. Several areas were still ablaze from the earlier villain attack, the flickering red and blue flames casting a ghostly light across the frightened faces of Izuku’s classmates.

Kota whimpered as a loud *crunch* boomed across the clearing. He ducked his head against Izuku’s shirt, his eyes streaming with large tears. “He…he killed…m-my—“

“We h-have to get into the forest!” Izuku called forward to Tenya, who was attempting to herd everyone up the dirt road that led to the highway some miles away. The muted sound of shattering trees reached his still deafened ears as he felt a gust of wind push past him. A small splinter of wood scraped his cheek, leaving a small red line through his freckles.

Tenya turned, dirt covering his face and his glasses coated in dust. He opened his mouth to reply, but his dark eyes widened dramatically. Izuku felt, rather than heard, the rumbling footsteps coming toward him from behind. The hairs on the back of his neck stood on end as he felt a chill run down his spine.

“So, which of you kids is Midoriya or Bakugo? I need to know who I’m not allowed to crush.”

Izuku turned rapidly. The muscular villain with the gleaming metal eye grinned, his lips pulling into a terrifying show of teeth. Izuku stumbled backward, his grip on Kota preventing him from breaking the fall as he landed painfully on his tailbone. The child was trembling as he slowly lifted his face from the green-haired teen’s shirt and stared into the face of his parents’ murderer.

“Don’t want to talk, eh? No problem.” The villain tossed something to the side, and Izuku nearly vomited as he saw the limp form of Vlad King slump against a tree trunk. Blood seemed to cover every inch of Class 1-B’s homeroom teacher. Behind him, Izuku heard Mineta let out a scream.

The blond villain shrugged and rolled his massive shoulders, the muscles in his arms and chest growing to obscene proportions. “I’ll just beat the information out of you.”

—

Eraserhead alternated sprinting across the pine-laden ground and swinging through the thick branches of the forest. He kept his breathing even, not allowing his body to exit the almost meditative state of his combat focus. *Always remain calm. Panic will only get you and everyone else killed.* Sweat dripped from his forehead and over the yellow strap of his goggles, but he ignored it. His students were the only thing on his mind.

A sound Eraserhead recognized as Todoroki’s ice shattering bounced through the trees to his right, and he adjusted course effortlessly. His feet flew over the packed dirt of the forest floor as the sounds of combat grew louder.

“Shoji! Where is Bakugo?”

A blast of ice and the *thud* of metal hitting the hard dirt.

“I don’t know!”

Eraserhead ran faster. To his left, Tiger and Ragdoll emerged from the trees, both headed toward the sounds of combat. The three pro heroes leapt forward, taking down the two villains in a surprise attack that left the large female holding the metal bar unconscious and the lizard with the sword wrapped in Eraserhead’s capture scarf.

Feeling the urgency from Tokoyami’s earlier statement, the Erasure Hero turned to the bird-headed boy and snapped, “What happened to Bakugo?”

Tokoyami pointed a shaking finger into the trees. Eraserhead’s dark eyes flashed to the branches above Ragdoll. Another villain stood there, gloved hands twirling a marble between his fingers.

“I believe it’s time to make my exit. Adieu!” The figure leapt into the

trees, his ochre trench coat flaring out behind him as he nimbly darted across the branches.

Eraserhead felt a flare of frustration in his chest, then quickly squashed it in the name of perfect efficiency. “Tiger, Ragdoll, you handle these two and get the students back to the cabin. I’ll go after Bakugo.” He turned to follow the villain, but was stopped by Tokoyami’s shaky voice.

“Sensei!” He called, his eyes shining with worry. “They’re after Midoriya as well!”

Shouta saw red. He was in the air before he thought to whip out his capture scarf and was soon soaring after the garishly-dressed villain. As tree branches covered with rounded leaves and sharp pine needles whipped past his face, his chest tightened with fury. *They attacked UA students.* My *students.* My *responsibility.*

*And they’re going after* MY KID.

Branches snapped past his face with a loud *whip* , but he didn’t allow himself to flinch as he rocketed through the trees. His dark eyes remained focused only on the tails of the trench coat in front of him. The villain was nimble, he could give him that much. And aware of Eraser’s quirk, judging by the ease with which he kept out of line-of-sight.

Branch to branch, light footfalls across the hard wood, his gray capture scarf snapping out to latch onto the next tree. Eraserhead felt his body slip into a deeper state of focus as he zeroed his focus down. His dark eyes watched the movements of his adversary like a hawk, hidden behind his yellow goggles. He would not let his prey escape. Not now. Not when Izuku was in danger.

Left, right, down to lower branches he flew through the forest. Sweat poured down his neck and under his loose clothes, but he paid no mind. His sole focus was his adversary.

There. A pattern to the man’s movements. Two steps, then a large leap. Always with the right foot. Using the cane to brace against the landing.

Eraserhead grinned.

A soft whistle through the air as his grey capture scarf whipped forward at just the right moment. Silky fabric circled the dirt-covered

end of the villain's cane, then cinched tight. The magician yelped as the support he expected to be there was pulled out from under him. The cane went flying back toward Eraserhead, who dodged easily as he unraveled his scarf from the useless prop.

Eraserhead dropped silently to the forest floor as the magician fell, crashing, through the trees. He dashed forward, capture weapon at the ready. He tossed it's grey finger-like tendrils towards the villain, stretching forward like it yearned to caress its prey. Eraserhead readied himself for the satisfaction that came with stringing up his adversaries, but dodged rapidly to the side as a wall of blue flame erupted between him and the villain.

Cursing, the Eraser Hero spun and snapped his capture weapon up into the trees again to avoid another burst of intense heat. Below, he spotted the same darkly dressed, heavily pierced man from the cabin. The stitched face smirked at him and launched another volley.

*What the hell is this guy?* Eraserhead grunted as he was pushed back by the singing heat again and again. The man was pulling no punches this time, and the forest was soon alight with crackling flames.

"Dabi!" The magician coughed, his voice barely audible of the roar of flames flowing from the other villain's hand. "I have Bakugo already. I haven't seen Midoriya yet. How long do we have?"

Dabi grunted, "Ten minutes. Muscular's at the cabin with the other one. Make sure he doesn't crush the kid before you nab him."

Shouta's eyes narrowed behind his goggles as he saw the magic villain dash off into the woods again. *Shit! There's another villain at the cabin.* He grunted as he held his back to a large tree trunk, fire dancing on either side of his hiding spot. His thoughts turned to Izuku, the spark of fear in his eye when Shouta pulled them both out of the burning forest, the tremors wracking his body as he held on tightly. Fury raced through him, its red-hot tendrils creeping into his meditative state and turning calm proficiency into deadly rage.

"He's already been through enough," Shouta growled, his voice piercing. "Don't you think?" He whirled, capture weapon wrapping around a wide swath of trees as Eraserhead dashed directly at the villain. Dabi grinned, readying another handful of blue flames. The blinding heat flew over Shouta's head as he slid to the ground, tightening his hold on the capture weapon and pulling it tightly to his body to snap it into place.

Gray wrapped around the dark trench coat worn by the fire user as his pierced face changed from calmly confident to shocked. His hands were instantly pinned to his side as Shouta's boots collided with his back, sending him face-first into the smoldering ground.

The man smiled cruelly up at Eraserhead as the pro hero stood above him and pulled the restraints tighter.

"You really are too cool, aren't you?" The smirk disappeared as his skin melted into grey sludge for the second time that night.

Eraserhead fumed silently as he whipped the sludge off his capture weapon and again leapt into the trees. He had a Problem Child to save.

—

Izuku gasped heavily, his chest burning from the inside out as he struggled to pull air into his winded lungs. Kota lay not far from him, pained brown eyes staring at Izuku in horror. A trickle of blood dripped from Izuku's broken nose as he stared at Kota. Behind the child, several of his classmates lay stunned, injuries covering their entire bodies. The rest of them continued the defensive assault on the enormous villain. Tenya sped rapidly around the battlefield, much faster than their opponent, but nowhere near the power level required to defeat him. Ashido defended Kaminari's limp form, splashing acid as rapidly as she could. Monoma stood his ground as well, fighting as best he could with Tenya's, Kaminari's, and Kota's quirks.

The villain roared happily, "You've got no chance in hell, you brats! But I'll sure enjoy the beat-down I'm going to give you before you die!"

A large crash assaulted Izuku's ears as Muscular brought his fist down where Tenya was standing. The speedster was able to dodge, but the force of the attack left a large crater in the earth and sent a cloud of dust up into the already smoke-filled air. The green-haired teen coughed heavily, his lungs protesting against the unclean air struggling to fill his chest.

A surge of electrified water doused the villain, stalling him momentarily until Monoma's hold on Kaminari's quirk faded. The blond watched, horrified, as the tall villain pushed through the electric shock. "Nice one, kid. Almost tickled." He dashed forward, knocking Monoma backward through the air and into a tree. The quirk-copier slid to the ground, unconscious and bleeding.

Tenya called out in surprise, then dodged rapidly again as another fist dented the ground.

“You gonna keep running forever? Like an annoying little bug? Get over here!” Enormous hands reached out like lightning, plucking an exhausted Tenya from the ground mid-sprint and hurling him into the remains of the ruined cabin.

Tears streamed down Izuku’s face as he heard the agonized cry of his friend. He crawled toward Kota, the only person in reach who wasn’t unconscious. He struggled, his left arm pinned underneath him, as he tried to remain quiet and not draw attention to his actions. *Kota…I have to keep him safe. I won’t let him get hurt by this monster again!*

Izuku felt the heavy footfalls before he heard them. Slow. Measured. Certain. A large boot stepped up next to Kota’s small form as the young child’s eyes widened in a primal fear.

“Now, now, kid. Don’t think you’re safe from me.” A large hand grasped the back of Kota’s shirt and lifted him into the air. The huge man smiled cruelly at Kota, his one good eye filled with crazed mania. “You’re the Waterhose Heroes’ brat, aren’t you? I’d recognize that stupid quirk anywhere.”

Kota whimpered, his limbs seemingly frozen in fear as he was lifted to eye-height with the man who killed his parents.

“You’ll have to say ‘hello’ to them for me. You’ll get to see them sooner than I will.” The villain laughed, winding his right arm back and bulking up his muscles for a super powered punch.

Everything seemed to slow as Izuku watched the muscled arm sling forward toward Kota’s terrified face. *Kota! NO! I WON’T LET YOU HURT HIM!*

Izuku was shocked to hear the last thought shouted out loud in his own voice. He felt his power surging through his body, the green lightning arcing from his skin as every inch of him tingled with potential. He felt it building, pooling in his legs. It gathered rapidly, filling every fiber of his body as his eyes began glowing a bright green.

“KOTA!” He shouted as he felt the power within him *snap* .

—

Eraserhead entered the clearing where the cabin used to stand and felt his rage growing. The building was slowly falling apart, the classroom completely decimated, not a brick undamaged. Beyond that, several of the supporting beams were exposed, and the logs that built the walls were scattered haphazardly across the outside dining area.

He continued racing towards the sounds of combat, noting Vlad King's limp form among the ruined pieces of cabin. *No time to check on him. The student's are in danger.* His mind paused. *Izuku's in danger.*

Ahead of him, he saw the gravel path they traveled on to get here. Craters of earth pot-marked the area, piles of dirt and rocks making the once maintained road look like a war zone. Shouta's dark eyes darted forward as the glow of *something* caught his attention. He heard Izuku shout, "KOTA!" His heart dropped as he realized the glow was Izuku's quirk, now racing across his body with such intensity that he shed light. In an instant, he saw what was about to happen.

Kota was about to die. The villain would surely kill such a small child with his attack. And Izuku, brave, self-sacrificing Izuku, was going to save him. At the expense of himself.

Shouta tried to activate Erasure, but the moment was over. He was a split second too late.

A crack echoed throughout the trees. Izuku rocketed forward, far faster than Shouta had ever seen him go. The teen's hands were outstretched, his face desperate. Tears streamed behind him as the wind pulled them from his dirty, freckled cheeks.

Muscular's fist raced Izuku to meet Kota. Izuku got there first. Whoosh-BANG- *crack!*

Izuku slid to the ground in a heap, Kota cradled against his chest with his one good arm, which fell limp shortly after. The child screamed, "IZU-CHAN!" He scrabbled at Izuku's chest, brown eyes looking up at the dent the teen's back made in the pine tree.

Eraserhead sprung into action, his quirk active and ice clenching around his heart. *No. Not him. I can't go through this again. Don't let him…* He couldn't finish the thought. He pushed it to the back of his mind. *You have responsibilities towards more than just Izuku. Your students are in danger. Protect them!*

Muscular turned to pursue Izuku and Kota, but his bulk deflated almost instantly. "What the—?" A booted foot slammed into the side

of his head, crushing the metal eye against his nose and cheek. The villain roared in pain, then swiped at Eraserhead as he swung around him. Shouta dodged easily, taking advantage of his surprise attack and the pain that distracted his opponent.

Eraser dodged left, right. Wide, sweeping swings came from nearly every direction as the villain flailed without the speed of his quirk to augment his naturally large body. The pro quickly worked up a sweat. The villain may not have speed and strength on his side, but he did have stamina.

“All right, hero,” Muscular spat, pulling the crumpled metal from his eye socket and causing blood to run down his face. “Let’s dance.”

Eraserhead’s heart thrummed, quick like a hummingbird’s wings. He kept his breathing even, his movements measured and sure. Precise. He was always precise, whether it was a student’s training plan or a villain takedown during his patrol. He would not be sloppy. Not now. Not ever. Not when his students’ lives were on the line. Not when… Izuku…

The two adversaries clashed, brute muscle to lithe strength. Eraser dashed in again and again, his assault relentless. The villain had stamina and strength to fend off his attacks, but as long as Erasure was active they could never gain the upper hand. Shouta didn’t allow himself to blink.

*Whip* -crash-bam! Even without his augmenting quirk, the villain packed a punch. Shouta felt a bruise forming on his stomach where Muscular scored a hit, the force of the blow crushing. Internal damage? Guaranteed. Would it stop him? Not today.

They continued their fight, the villain calling out and taunting Eraserhead while the pro hero remained stoically silent. He was pure focus. Absolute intensity. He had no time for this idiot when his kid could be severely injured. The villain was just an obstacle to be overcome. Not worth his time. He said so.

“You pros, always so cocky. But I’m done playing kiddie games with you!” Muscular flung his arm up from his crouched position, dirt flying into the air and Eraserhead’s face. Shouta raged as his eyes reflexively closed against the foreign particles filtering through his goggles. *Damn dust, why does this dumbass have to be smart for once?*

The blow that landed square on his chest was altogether expected, but nonetheless forced every bit of air out of his lungs as he flew into the

side of the ruined cabin, dirt and debris falling on top of his body from the impact. The blows continued to rain down, even while he was stuck under the remains of the ruined building. The villain wasn't pulling any punches, nor was he allowing Eraserhead even a moment to breathe.

Shouta felt every inch of his body. Not one part of him seemed to be free of scratches, cuts, burns, or bruises. Pain seared like fire through his nerves as he fought to open his eyes. *Shit! Get yourself out of this situation, Eraser. He found your weakness, don't let him beat you because of it.* Shouta relaxed, letting his body go limp, faking unconsciousness. The villain continued his assault for several moments before huffing out, "Finally passed out, huh? Damn. I was hoping to get you to scream at least once."

The sound of something heavily lifting off the ground twitched across Shouta's ears. One of the cabin walls? No. A large piece of metal. It screeched as Muscular tore it from the cement foundation.

"Time for nighty night, hero. I'm sure your students appreciated the help."

Shouta's eyes opened, streaming with agitated tears from the dust in them. The villain was standing above him, a metal support beam above his head and aimed at Eraserhead's chest, his muscles three times as large as All Might's.

Shouta activated Erasure.

The confidently cruel smile on the villain's face morphed to confusion as his muscles deflated to regular proportions. The steel beam teetered in his suddenly weaker hands. His legs started shaking violently, then buckled. Shouta dodged out of the way, his muscles screaming at him as his damaged body rebelled against the quick movement. Metal crashed heavily to the ground with a sickening squelch, the muscled man crushed underneath the impossible weight of steel collapsing on his unprotected body.

Shouta did not stop to examine the villain. Whoever he was, he was dead. Blood pooled from under the beam in quantities that even Vlad King could not withstand. He sprinted to where he saw Izuku collide with the tree, then stopped. A dent the size of his young ward broke the straight line of the trunk, but at the base of the tree there was only an empty space and the magician.

The man tipped his hat to Shouta, then stepped backward into a portal

made of swirling mist and disappeared, two marbles held between his fingers.

Chapter End Notes

I have realized in writing this chapter, that I despise action sequences with more than 2 characters. BUT! It had to be done. :D

Hope y'all enjoy and won't kill me for another cliff hanger!

Also, thank you all for such lovely comments last chapter! I know you wanted to end me right then and there, but all the theory crafting and wondering about what would happen next has been really fun to read. :D

—

Are you a total nerd? Love reading/writing fanfiction? Come join other nerds like you in my discord server! https://discord.gg/6vfCJQ88et

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

> PLEASE READ: Several readers found a discrepancy in some earlier chapters, and that discrepancy is this: a few chapters ago Aizawa deduced that Izuku was quirkless, however he didn't actually have some of the key information he used to deduce that fact. I thought when Aizawa and All Might spoke at the hospital after Izuku broke his arm that All Might explained how One for All could be passed down, but he did not. So, I need to rewrite that chapter to fix that problem. I'll get to it probably after the story is complete and I work through all the chapters to rewrite the whole story.
>
> TLDR: I messed up in an earlier chapter and made it so Aizawa figured out that Izuku was quirkless, but he didn't actually have the right info to figure that out. I will be rewriting the chapter so Aizawa only figures out that Izuku was a late bloomer/false negative.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku drifted. Reality bent in strange shapes around a fish-eye lens. Purple kaleidoscope shapes flitted through his vision.

—

Shouta checked his students for critical injuries as they waited for the buses to arrive from UA. Mandalay called on an emergency line out to the nearest city. Apparently the few hours of cell service they had yesterday was a fluke. No cell towers were near enough to provide more than a few moments of service.

He should have known something was up. He stayed at the cabin before. Never once did he have more than one bar. *Idiot. You let yourself get distracted. Now look what happened.*

—

"Get rid of the third player. He's deadweight."

"I'll let him out a few streets down."

"You idiot. Kill the kid. We can't have any witnesses."

“Shigaraki, the child hasn’t witnessed anything.”

“Still deadweight. Get *rid* of him! I don’t want any loose ends butting in again.”

“Fine, but not here.”

—

The bumpy bus ride back to UA jarred every inch of Shouta’s body painfully. Every dip, bump, or tilt of the vehicle made another one of his injuries apparent.

He took solace in the fact that none of his students were mortally injured, though Iida, Vlad King, and Monoma had to be flown to the nearest hospital. The rest were on the buses with him and the Pussycats. No student was being left alone with the threat of attack so fresh in their minds.

He wondered what kind of state Izuku was in. He grit his teeth against a wave of shame. *I couldn’t save him in time.*

—

“Deku!”

“*Deku!* Get the hell up!”

“Goddamn it, deku! Quit playing dead, it’s just us in here you twerp!”

Izuku felt someone shaking him. He *screamed.*

—

Recovery Girl kissed the back of Shouta’s hand and he instantly felt a wave of exhaustion as his myriad injuries healed. Hizashi’s worried eyes watched him behind Recovery Girl. Tears streamed down his face. Shouta felt the weight of what he’d done. Shame filled him.

He lost his kid. He lost *their* kid.

—

The other presence in the room disappeared. It was quiet.

Izuku’s leg throbbed, as did his ribs. He could tell the bones were broken, just not sure how badly.

How long had it been since the other left? Who was it anyway?

Deku…they called him Deku…

He grew worried. His tear and ash crusted eyes cracked open to examine the room. *Where am I? Where is Kaachan?*

—

Shouta straightened the tie on his black suit, eyes unable to meet his husband's as the blond waited patiently behind him with a hair tie. He glanced up to meet Hizashi's eyes in the mirror, dark eyes as serious as they'd ever been.

"I'll get him back, 'Zashi."

Yellow-green eyes met his with determination. "I know you will. Bring him home, Shou."

—

Izuku painfully scooted closer to the door, where voices could be heard under the crack by the hardwood floor. His back seared with pain, as did his leg and ribs. He used what little strength remained in his arms to maneuver. The cast on his left arm was broken into several pieces that hung limply from him. His skin was tender, but the bone didn't seem to protest against taking his weight, something he was incredibly grateful for.

*"…us. You're just the kind of kid who could do well in our organization."*

*"What the hell is that supposed to mean, hah?"*

*"We saw you at the Sports Festival. You were vicious. That's the kind of player two I need."*

A pause. Izuku breathed in an unsteady breath. He recognized both voices. Kaachan and Shigaraki. The first sent a wave of relief now that he knew where Kaachan was. The second, a chill of fear down his spine. The hairs on the back of his neck stood upright as he flashed back to their encounter at the mall. He swallowed reflexively, phantom pain drifting across the front of his neck.

*"Why the hell would I want to work with a freak like you?"*

A low growl filtered under the door. *"He's so* rude. *That's not very nice. If you're going to be my player two, you won't be allowed to call me that."*

*“I’ll call you whatever the hell I want, freakshow!”*

Izuku heard another growl and a crash. He pressed his ear closer to the door, his arms shaking under the strain of holding him upright.

*“Shigaraki,”* A calm, deep voice interrupted. *“You may want to watch this.”*

A click. Then the sounds of the late-night news.

—

Shouta glared into the bright lights assaulting him from every angle. Flashing bulbs from cameras, as well as the bright stage lights from the interview room lanced into his tired eyes. His only solace in this abysmal situation was the sight of his husband off to the side in the crowd.

“On behalf of UA, I apologize to the families of the students who have been affected by this latest attack. As teachers at UA, we swore to protect your children as they learn to be heroes in a safe environment. We have failed to do so.” He bowed after his scripted line, his nose almost reaching the table.

A clamor of questions were flung at the three at the table. Beside him, Vlad King shifted uncomfortably in his mummy-wrap of bandages. Shouta was glad the pro wasn’t dead, though the man was very nearly there when they pulled the rubble off. Nedzu stood on his chair to give himself some extra height and spoke into the microphone.

“We will be accepting just a few questions for now. We all have responsibilities to attend to in the wake of this latest attack.”

The reporters all began talking at once. Nedzu pointed at one of them. “Your question, please.”

“What security measures is UA taking to ensure this never happens again? This is the second attack on a UA facility this year!”

Nedzu answered the question tactfully, but without actually providing an answer. The rat had several ideas in mind once they were able to get Bakugo and Izuku back, but blasting that info out to the general public would make the plans useless.

Another question. “What did they want those two students for, exactly? Reports say they were targeting Bakugo and Midoriya

specifically!”

Again Nedzu answered, “Their motives are unclear, though it seems they wanted young Bakugo to join their ranks. Their interest in young Midoriya is not known.”

Shouta glanced at the rat at the last sentence. He knew the animal’s tells, and Nedzu was lying when speaking about Izuku. Something to keep tabs on after his kid was home again.

“Will Bakugo join them? He was particularly aggressive at the Sports Festival, nearly foaming at the mouth on the winner’s stand!”

Shouta felt anger flare in his chest. He leaned forward to answer the question directly. “Anyone who thinks Bakugo Katsuki would willingly turn to villainy is an idiot who hasn’t been paying attention. The kid is aggressive, yes. But so is Endeavor. Aggression is no indication of villainy. Intent is. Bakugo has only ever wanted to be the Number One Hero. As his teacher, I don’t doubt that’s where he’ll end up.”

Shouta leaned back, satisfied at the dumbfounded look on the reporter’s face. He didn’t let his internal feelings show, however. Bakugo had a long way to go before he would reach the status of Number One Hero if he had anything to say about it. Bullying, while not an indicator in itself, was not a good sign. Especially if it was to the extent Shouta heard at the camp. Izuku’s reactions to the boy made his stomach twist uncomfortably, not to mention the things Izuku screamed at Bakugo at the camp. But the public didn’t need to know that. That was private. Family business. Izuku was *his kid* after all.

—

Shigaraki growled, the sound reverberating heavily across the wooden floor as he stalked forward.

*“You hear that, freaky hands? I’ll never be a villain. You and your stupid group can go fu—“*

A loud crash sounded from the other side of the door Izuku was crouched behind, and he heard multiple shouts as debris flew into the main room. His heart leapt as he heard a familiar voice yell, “I AM HERE.”

The sounds of combat reverberated through the building as Izuku scrambled for the doorknob desperately. His tired arms could only get

him so far up, so he chanced lifting himself onto his one good knee. His muscles trembled as he did so, but he was able to grasp the doorknob. Locked.

Izuku cried out as he began banging against the door, hoping the noise would reach All Might's ears through the chaos. Behind the door, crashes, bangs, and shouted pain continued to echo through the space.

"I'm o-over here!" Izuku yelled, his voice cracking in his dry throat. He coughed heavily as his body fell tiredly against the wall. He continued to pound at the door even as his lungs spasmed.

"I'm—" A series of hacking coughs. "I'm here! All Might!"

Through the door, *"Don't let them escape!"*

Behind him, Izuku sensed a presence. The smell of ozone filled the small room as he turned his head to look. Purple-black smoke swirled and the Warp Villain reached forward to drag him through the portal.

"No!" Izuku screamed, his voice cracking again. The smoke hand of the Warp Villain snatched at his broken ankle, grabbing it tightly and causing Izuku to scream again. It felt like a thousand needles speared through the bone as he was pulled toward the swirling mist. He was halfway through it, tears raining from his eyes, when the door burst open to reveal All Might in his hero costume.

His usual smile was grim, and his eyes glared at the villain pulling Izuku away. "Oh no you don't!" He leapt forward, following Izuku through the portal as he was completely enveloped by the mist.

—

Shouta sat in the back of UA's car as Hizashi drove them towards the prearranged raid center. Vlad King and Nedzu both sat silently in the other passenger seats as they drove. Hizashi's eyes flickered up to meet his in the rear-view mirror as Shouta stewed in the back. His dark eyes met his husband's and they shared a silent conversation. Hizashi's face showed his concern and worry, and a whole host of other emotions that were roiling inside the man. Shouta's lip twitched into a momentary smile before dropping again. He had nothing to smile about right now.

The ride was silent until they were approximately five minutes from the raid center. They passed the hospital where the majority of his

students were healing before Nedzu turned to Shouta, “You spoke quite highly of young Bakugo, Shouta. I was rather under the impression you thought he might be trouble?”

Shouta sighed, tucking a loose piece of his black hair behind his ear for a moment of thought before answering. “He *is* trouble. But I’m not going to admit that to reporters when he’s been kidnapped.”

Nedzu hummed happily as his tiny feet swung in front of him. “Good. We don’t need personal details getting in the way of this rescue effort.” He twiddled his thumbs for several seconds. “Your reaction at the interview makes me wonder, is there more to young Bakugo than what we discussed before the exams?”

Shouta leaned forward and rubbed his eyes tiredly as he considered whether to answer. On the one hand, Bakugo’s treatment of Izuku seemed to be highly related to the kid’s nervousness and insecurities. Bullying of that magnitude suggested major character flaws that he, as Bakugo’s teacher, would need to correct before he ever allowed the teen to get a hero license. On the other hand, Izuku had barely spoken about it except the few shouted words at the camp, which he probably regretted afterwards. *Family business*. The words drifted through his mind, reminiscent of his mother. She always used the term as a sort of protection for Shouta, keeping his unique quirk under wraps from the people that took offense to it. Should he do the same here? Protect Izuku? Or bring it to the light and force Bakugo to atone?

Realizing he paused for too long, Shouta glanced at the principal before muttering, “I’ll speak with you about it later. Now isn’t the time.” Not when his kid was in danger. He couldn’t focus on something so mundane right now. Izuku was hurt, he was kidnapped, and he wasn’t *here*.

“Very good,” Principal Nedzu chirped, then turned to Vlad King. “How are your injuries, Sekijiro?”

The Blood Hero grunted, then shrugged slowly. “I can’t say I’ve had worse, but I’ll live.”

“Excellent!” The white rat slipped out of the parked car as they arrived at the raid center. “Then I do hope you’ll put your maximum effort in, all of you.” Nedzu smiled, but it didn’t reach his beady black eyes as they exited the car. “We have students to save.”

—

Izuku dropped onto hard tiles and coughed and coughed and *coughed*. Ash, dust, now mist. His lungs burned at the foreign materials filling them, fighting to expel the unwanted particles. He barely pulled in a breath as his eyes streamed before his diaphragm spasmed again and air was rapidly pushed out of his lungs.

As he was struggling to breathe, Shigaraki's voice whined behind him. "Sensei, the heroes found our hideout! We were just getting started, and they *interrupted!*"

"Silence, Tomura. We have guests. Kurogiri, get Tomura out of here."

Izuku didn't recognize the voice, but it nonetheless sent ice down his spine. He heaved from his rough coughs, but he felt frozen to the floor. His green eyes stared down at the reflective surface of the tiles, his own horrified face looking back at him.

"All Might. I admit, I didn't think our next meeting would be this soon, but I welcome you nevertheless." The voice was smooth, calm, and terrifying. The undercurrent of complete confidence made the words seem almost sickly sweet.

Amidst the almost calm conversation, Izuku's ears perked at the sound of combat from further down the warehouse-like building he was teleported to. His green eyes looked up to see half the building destroyed and the full moon shining down into the remnants. Pro heroes, at least ten of them, fought in the debris against a hoard of Nomus.

"All for One," All Might growled to Izuku's right. His boots thudded against the smooth tiles as the enormous man stood to his full height above Izuku. The teen looked up at his idol, green, frightened eyes meeting sunken blue ones. They conveyed one word. *Hide.*

All Might stepped between Izuku and the voice. Izuku did his best to scramble into a position where he could move, but his broken ribs and legs protested. He flopped onto the floor, his arms slowly pulling his broken body towards a fallen pillar he could hide behind.

"I thought you were dead. Sorry to see I was wrong." All Might's signature smile, now strained and more like a grimace, remained on his face even as his words held an incredible amount of venom.

The other man laughed, the sound warm and all at once chilling amid the sounds of chaos around them. "Of course, old friend. I needed time to recover." The man paused, and Izuku reached the pillar he was

aiming for. He turned to watch All Might and saw the horrific visage of his opponent. Maybe this All for One was a man once, but it was difficult to tell where features started and ended on his disfigured face. A metal mask covered the bottom half of his face, and his eyes, or where they should have been, were covered in heavily scarred skin.

The villain continued, “It seems like I wasn’t the only one, All Might. You’ve been getting weaker, so I hear. Less time on the streets, fewer and fewer villains captured. Are you losing your touch?”

A tendril of black power snapped out at All Might’s chest. The pro easily dodged the attack with his speed, jumping to another location as the tendril left a crater in the smooth stone. Izuku let out a small gasp of surprise, but tried to hide it, pushing himself further into the corner. He didn’t know anything about this man, but the seriousness which All Might was treating the situation with gave him everything he needed to know. This villain was *dangerous*.

“I’m sure you know I’ve been teaching this year, All for One. Isn’t that why your lackies keep attacking the school?” All Might rushed forward and punched the air, sending a torrent of wind across the room at the villain in the suit. The man flew up into the air to dodge the attack, causing Izuku to choke. *Is that a second quirk?!*

The villain laughed, “Oh yes, All Might. Teaching. I’m sure that was the perfect excuse to cover your weakened state.” All for One flew forward, calling out, “Strength enhancement times four, speed enhancement times three! Hypertrophy!” His arm grew to immense proportions as he zipped through the air to All Might’s location. The Number One Hero braced his legs and leapt out of the way again as a massive crater exploded into existence on the warehouse floor. Izuku shielded his face as bits of tile flew through the air and dust plumed.

Panic rose in Izuku’s chest, his stomach clenching tightly as he glanced around desperately for a better place to hide. *With this amount of destruction, I’ll be crushed for sure! I can’t help All Might in my state. I have to get out of his way!* All he saw was the destroyed warehouse and the powerful blows traded by All Might and the other pro heroes alike. Best Jeanist sent out a web of fibers binding multiple Nomus together as Mt Lady lined up for a supersized kick.

Izuku began crawling from his hiding place toward a broken wall that led to an empty alleyway.

“I think we both know why your powers are waning, All Might!”

Another boom and whoosh of dust and debris. The man laughed as All Might dashed in to rain punches down on All for One. The villain raised his arm, “Absorption times two!” The punches pushed him back, but otherwise seemed to do no damage as Izuku scooted over the rubble-strewn floor. His arms screamed with exhaustion and his broken ribs screamed with pain. He panted heavily, teeth grit tightly and tears streaming down his dirty cheeks, leaving streaks of grime across his freckles.

“That’s why you’re so protective of young Midoriya here, aren’t you, Toshinori?”

—

Shouta watched the footage of the bar raid attentively. Bakugo was clearly at that location, but was whisked away shortly after the battle began. The footage had no sound, so Shouta had only the video to cling to. He was searching. Cataloging. Every face shown, every bit of clothing. He had to find him. Izuku. Edgeshot’s video footage rustled heavily as he used his quirk to kill a Nomu at the bar before transforming back.

Shouta saw All Might immediately go to secure Shigaraki, but missed him by inches as the Warp villain pulled him through a misty gate. Edgeshot went to grab Bakugo, but he too was swept away by the swirling mist.

The Eraser hero cursed. Eyes scanning the rest of the chaotic scene from the view screens in the police raid center. Tsukauchi stood beside him, as well as Hizashi as they all watched the raid play out. On the screen, Edgeshot turned towards a side door, his attention drawn by something. His arm pointed to the door, and All Might smashed through it handily. Edgeshot rushed forward to see what was inside, the rest of the villains in the main bar either restrained or escaped.

Shouta’s heart leapt as he caught sight of a frightened and pained face disappearing through the mist, freckled cheeks covered in dirt and tear-tracks. His hands clenched tightly on the back of the chair he was leaning against, knuckles turning white with the force of his grip. *Izuku.*

—

Izuku’s heart stopped as an enraged yell exploded from All Might. The hero rushed forward, his fist drawn back. “Detroit SMASH!” Powerful

winds hurling through the air at speeds unimaginable buffeted the flying villain back until he slammed against a pillar of stone.

All for One coughed heavily as he regained his breath, the sound gargled through the metal mask covering the lower half of his face. All Might continued the assault, his punches coming from every direction as the two enemies settled into the first true fight of their match. Both seemed equal in their ability to damage and dodge, All Might with his superior strength and speed, All for One with his apparent multitude of quirks.

Izuku took his chance to continue towards the exit, his mind racing at the possibilities of the villain's quirk as he fought to ignore the pain in his body. *Does he copy them like Monoma? Or does he just have that many? Even Monoma has a limit to the number of quirks, and he's shown at least eight if the multipliers are to be believed!*

"Deku!"

Izuku froze, his head snapping to his left where the hushed yell came from. Bakugo's spiky blond head peeked over a pile of debris, a deep cut across his cheek that seeped red blood down to his chin. Dirt coated his entire face, streaks of grime and soot staining his pale skin. Beside him, the limp form of a small Nomu lay still, burns covering every inch of the dark purple skin.

"Get the hell up, nerd! There's no time to crawl around!" Bakugo stood to his full height and reached down to grab Izuku under both arms, dragging him half-way to his feet before Izuku let out a shout of pain.

"K-Kaachan! Stop!"

Bakugo grunted, pulling them both behind a large piece of medical equipment before asking, "What the hell is wrong with you?" His red eyes blazed with rage and frustration. Izuku wasn't sure he even saw it, but he thought there might have been a flash of fear behind the angry exterior.

"I-I think m-my ribs are broken," Izuku panted, trying to get his good leg under him as the broken one buckled. His ankle for sure. At least two breaks in his shin, and one complete break in his femur. Better than his arm after the exam, but not good. Definitely not good.

Bakugo cursed as he looked Izuku over. "Dammit, deku! How am I supposed to use my quirk if I have to carry your useless ass?"

Izuku ignored the flare of additional panic from Bakugo's words. This was no time to have an attack. He was not safe. He could *not* lose control right now. "I-I can hold on w-with my arms. M-maybe."

Bakugo's red eyes looked him over, then glanced up at All Might's and All for One's battle, which had demolished a further quarter of the building. The booms and crashes coming from the fight assaulted both of their ears.

"Shit," Bakugo cursed, then went to pull Izuku up by his arms. "Fine. Get on, deku."

—

"Something's happening at the warehouse!" A police officer across the room called out. Shouta, Hizashi, and Tsukauchi rushed over to the other bank of screens, muscles tense after watching both kidnapped students disappear.

The warehouse, which was another lucky find by Tsukauchi's team, was in absolute chaos. Most of the pro heroes were out of commission except those within the top ten. Best Jeanist continued to restrain the multitude of Nomus with ease, allowing his fellow heroes to clean up, but the Nomu were quickly overwhelming them.

Further into the warehouse, a familiar mist swirled into view of Kamui Woods' camera. Shigaraki, the magician, and a young girl in a school outfit Shouta didn't recognize landed harshly on the tile of the warehouse, shortly followed by Bakugo. The kid wasted no time in blasting off his restraints and sending a barrage of explosions at the villains before leaping toward Best Jeanist and becoming lost in the rubble.

A man in a well-tailored suit stepped forward, only his legs visible in the light from the moon and the shaky camera. Shigaraki looked up at the man's face, talking, before being pulled away again by the mist.

Shouta continued watching, waiting. Hizashi put a clenched hand on his shoulder, the man's tension clearly evident. *Where is Izuku*?

Another swirl of mist. A small form dropped out of it, laying still on the ground before a much larger man stepped out after him. All Might. *So, that has to be Izuku*, Shouta thought, feeling Hizashi's hand clench around his shoulder harder.

Kamui Woods' camera panned away. The Nomu were overwhelming

them, and not even Best Jeanist's restraints could hold them all back. The man was almost out of fiber, his jacket completely stripped bare, and his pants more like a loin cloth at this point.

Shouta turned to watch the other cameras hoping for a glimpse of his kid on one of them. Nothing. The other views were entirely of the battle between the purple Nomus and the pro heroes. Not a glimpse of Izuku or Bakugo in any of them.

Shouta felt his body tense as his dark eyes stared at the screens, willing any of the pro heroes to look in the direction of Izuku. He needed to make sure his kid was alright. He couldn't let that panicked, terrified face be the last thing he ever sees of Izuku.

He growled in dissatisfaction as more of the cameras went down with the pros they were attached to, leaving only two screens still up: Best Jeanist and Kamui Woods. Both best at restraining their opponents and not overpowering them. The fight was beginning to look dire.

Kamui Woods' camera shifted as the hero looked up, his attention drawn to the sky. A helicopter. Shouta spotted the JVN5 logo on the side. Snapping his head to one of the officers sitting before a blank screen, he barked, "Turn on the news!"

—

Izuku grit his teeth against the pain as Bakugo hefted him up onto his shoulders. His broken ribs ground uncomfortably as the blond began trudging rapidly through the debris. The pain of moving so quickly made Izuku's head swim as his legs dangled behind him.

The sounds of battle hovered around Izuku's ears, the noises muted and dull from the fog swirling around Izuku's thoughts. His focus narrowed to only what he could feel. His leg, broken and searing with needle-like agony. His ribs, broken and burning every inch of his chest. His skin, seared in places and scratched everywhere else. The heat of Bakugo's explosions as he cleared a way through the Nomu and debris. That sound reached his ears just fine. *Crack-crack-POP-BOOM!* Despite his earlier thoughts, Izuku felt internal panic rising in his chest as he began trembling.

*No! Not now! We have to get out of here!*

"DIE!" Bakugo screamed, scorching a Nomu and sending it flying away only to be captured by Kamui Woods' Lacquered Chain Prison.

Izuku clenched his arms tighter around Bakugo's shoulders, tears streaming more heavily and soaking the other teen's shirt. Everything hurt. His ribs felt like fire. Like every burn Kaachan gave him as children, but tenfold.

"Quit sniveling, deku! I'm trying to concentrate!"

Izuku began counting as he breathed, but the deep breaths agitated his already pained ribs. That trick wouldn't be possible today. His teeth sunk deep into his bottom lip, and he instantly tasted blood on his tongue. *Shouta,* he thought. *Hizashi.* He cast his mind away from this moment, thinking about sharing tea with his teacher late at night while Tofu lay over his toes. Eating dinner at the couples' table while Hizashi chatted with him about his favorite heroes and things he wanted to talk about on his radio show. The guest room in their apartment. *His* room. Hizashi said so, didn't he?

"Bakugo! Up here, man!"

The unexpected voice from above shook Izuku out of his thoughts. It was…but no. It couldn't be. Why was he here?

"HAH? What the hell?"

Izuku looked up to see three of his classmates, all decked out in various bad disguises, flying through the air on what appeared to be a glider Yaoyarozu made. Todoroki's fire blasted behind them as they flew over the building from the ice ramp he made. Kirishima's hand reached out towards them, face grinning maniacally.

"Let's go!"

Bakugo growled, then aimed his explosions at the ground and blasted them both forward. Izuku wrapped his arms tighter around the blond's chest, holding on for dear life as they soared into the air. Once they were high enough, Bakugo's hand grasped Kirishima's as the trio's momentum swept them up in it.

Yaoyarozu reached out for Izuku, her face relieved as they continued to glide over the district and away from the battle.

Izuku stretched a hand out to take hers, expression morphing into one of confusion as her eyes widened in fear. A tendril of black energy wrapped around Izuku's good leg and he felt himself ripped from his classmates. A huge gust of wind buffeted the glider and its passengers as Izuku felt himself falling down…down…down…

—

The news footage streamed live on JVN5's broadcast. The female reporter watched the chaos below, giving a live commentary as events unfolded inside the ruined warehouse.

"It appears some sort of rescue team is engaging!" She turned to watch as a silvery glider launched off an all-too-familiar pillar of ice, and a jet of flame propelled the craft forward. A series of explosions rose from the ground to meet the glider, and Shouta saw his students' disguised faces in the zoomed in camera footage.

If he wasn't so damn furious with them he might have been proud.

Just then, the reporter gasped. A huge BOOM briefly overrode the recording equipment, the noise too loud for the microphone. A plume of dust rose over the back half of the warehouse as the fight between All Might and the suited villain escalated in an instant.

The dust settled slowly, and the cameraman zoomed in further to where All Might was standing tall. Or, where he was supposed to be standing tall. Shouta's stomach dropped as he saw Yagi's severely reduced form draped in the excessive fabric of his hero costume, now far too large for his skinny frame. All of the police officers gasped in horror except Tsukauchi, whose clenched jaw told Shouta all he needed to know.

"Is…is that All Might?" The reporter gasped, blue eyes wide as she stared into the fray.

Shouta willed the camera to zoom out, to show him that Izuku and Bakugo were safely out of this fight, but the man behind the machine had other plans. He zoomed in further, accentuating the skinny, sunken form of the Number One Hero. Blood dripped from Yagi's chin in heavy rivulets and scratches covered his thin body from head to toe. His yellow bangs, usually upright in his hero form, hung limp and sad in his face.

*Izuku, show me Izuku, dammit!* And the camera did. Not far from Yagi, leg wrapped in a black tendril that led back to the villain, Izuku's gasping form scrabbled for purchase on the loose gravel in the demolished warehouse.

Shouta's mind blanked. *Izuku…he's still there…he didn't make it out.* Heart thudding against his chest, limbs tense and energized, Shouta leaned forward, dark eyes staring at the teen on the screen.

“Shou…” He heard Hizashi mutter as the blond gazed horrified at the screen. Everything was falling apart in this one moment. All Might’s secret was out. And Izuku was unprotected in the middle of the biggest fight of the decade.

“I…I…can’t believe it! Kamino Ward is in ruins, and All Might…All Might…” The reporter couldn’t form words, her shock too great. Her sentiments were mirrored on the faces of the officers around the room, but Shouta only cared about one thing.

*Kamino Ward,* he thought, his mind racing over his instinctual understanding of this city. *We’re just one district over.*

Shouta sprinted for the exit.

—

Izuku gasped for breath as he tried to pull himself away from the black tendril around his leg. It continued to pull him ever closer to All for One, who floated forward.

“Hello, Midoriya Izuku. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Izuku didn’t turn around, couldn’t. Fear froze him into only one movement, slowly crawling away from the sound. He could see All Might’s deflated form out of the corner of his eye. Yagi-san was breathless, slumped over as he coughed blood onto the ground.

“I’ll admit, I thought Toshinori would choose someone…a little more worthy of the quirk he wielded. But,” the villain tisked as he continued to hover over him. “I’ll take an easy win if it’s handed to me.”

Izuku could hear the grin in the man’s voice. The mask was long destroyed in the battle, but the green-haired teen didn’t dare look up. He didn’t want to see. Couldn’t force himself to gaze into this monster’s face.

“Now, if you don’t mind. I’ll just be taking One for All. Don’t worry, I’m sure your quirkless body will have no trouble reverting to your primitive state.”

Izuku felt more than saw the hand that was approaching him, and he scrambled faster against the ground, pained whimpers escaping his throat. A whoosh of wind passed over his head, sending small rocks and a cloud of dirt past him.

“Don’t touch him,” All Might panted, his right arm muscled and large, while the rest of him stayed deflated. The villain slammed into a pillar across the warehouse, laughing.

“Still have some fight left, Toshinori? Your master would be proud. She fought me tooth and nail until the very end.” The man floated upward again, his voice turning to ice. “But, in the end she was no more effective against me than this pathetic creature you call a successor.”

All Might yelled, “Detroit SMASH!” Another wave of wind rushed through the almost completely destroyed warehouse. Yagi, unable to power up his legs, stayed in one spot, fending off the attacks from All for One as best he could, while calling out to Izuku, “Get out of here, kid!”

Adrenaline surged through Izuku’s exhausted body, and he crawled. Broken stone and metal scratched at his hoodie, ripping it to shreds and he rapidly pulled himself away from the battle. *Get out, get away! Don’t let All Might fail because he’s trying to protect me!*

A boom, and resulting crash. All Might yelled, “Air Cannon!” A whirlwind blew past, the force of it bringing tears to Izuku’s eyes immediately.

“Texas Smash!” The sound of flesh hitting flesh, followed by a near sonic boom and deep laughter.

“Impact Recoil! Strength enhancer times three.”

The battle raged behind Izuku as tears ran continuously down his cheeks. Terror gripped him. The only thing he could do was run, *run, RUN!* But his body couldn’t keep up. His arms shook with the effort, and the pain in his chest and leg prevented him from getting too far.

Izuku was just about to the alleyway he saw earlier, when All Might crashed into the wall ahead of him, completely deflated and bleeding heavily. His deep-set blue eyes stared into Izuku’s with anguish. Not for himself, but for Izuku.

“I’m sorry, kid,” he croaked, hand reaching out to him.

Izuku heard All for One land on the debris behind him, his classy shoes crunching against shattered glass. His chilling voice calmly called, “You upset me greatly today, Toshinori. I had so many plans for these Nomu. I think it’s time to repay the favor to your young

successor. It’s only fair, afterall.” A pause, then, ice-cold. “Forced Quirk Activation.”

Chapter End Notes

Hey all! Sorry for the long wait and short chapter. Life decided to pummel me into the ground for the last month or so.

I haven’t gone through and edited this chapter, so if it sucks, I apologize, but I was just desperate to get the chapter written and out. Having said that, if you see errors (grammatically or otherwise), please let me know!

—

Want to hang out with people who like fanfiction like you? Interested in participating in low stakes writing challenges? Join my discord! https://discord.gg/6vfCJQ88et

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku stared into inky blackness, unable to move, unable to speak, his eyes locked in one position. A tiny light, the only blip in the otherwise impenetrable void, hovered a short distance away, just below eye-level. It quivered as he watched, jittering this way and that.

Behind him, he heard quiet voices muttering.

*"Eight is…won't last much longer…"*

*"…Getting closer…do you see…?"*

"I see it."

A sigh. The light jerked to the right, then left, it's bright yellow glow flickering.

*"No time…have to…now…"*

"He isn't ready."

*"…die…too hurt…"*

*"Maybe…not Eight's…?"*

Izuku felt the hair on the back of his neck prick up. His eyes, the only part of his body he could move, flicked instinctually to the only other thing he could see. Though the world around him was completely black, something… *darker* slithered toward him. It slowly slid across the ground, the brief flickers from the yellow light glinting off its oily form. Fear built inside him. He didn't know why, but that thing was dangerous.

He blinked. The voices continued behind him, some shifting in and out of focus, like tuning a radio.

A woman's voice, he could tell that more distinctly now, warned strictly, *"It's almost here. Make a decision."*

A man sighed quietly, then murmured, "Daigoro."

Izuku watched the slick tendril of complete darkness slipping ever closer. The yellow light spasmed as it passed, then went dim and stopped moving. The thing crept closer and closer to him. A presence appeared behind him, but it didn't instill fear. He felt reassured. Protected.

The voice was clear when it spoke. *"Sorry, Nine. This may not feel great, but at least you'll live."*

A hand rested on his shoulder, the large, warm palm emitting a red aura and making the tips of his fingers tingle. At the same time, the dark tendril struck out at him, its inky blackness landing right where his heart should be.

"Forced Quirk Activation."

Izuku curled in on himself, his ribs screaming in protest as he tensed against the inevitable pain waiting for him with All for One's strike. His dirt-covered arms covered his head and neck, though he knew it wouldn't help. He was done for. *One for All activated forcefully? I'll be shattered to pieces by All Might's quirk! No no no! I'm sorry, All Might. I'm too useless to be your successor!* Tears ran down his face as the last time he saw Hizashi and Shouta together flashed through his panicked mind. He'd never see them again. They would tell his mom that she was right, he was too weak to be a hero. *Quirkless, useless, deku!*

The anticipated pain never came.

"Hmm. Interesting." All for One's voice was carelessly curious. His well-tailored shoes crunched against the gravel as he turned. "I didn't take you for one to rush in so recklessly. It's rather unbecoming of an underground hero, don't you think, Eraserhead?"

"Get away from him." A familiar, gravelly voice growled low, the slightest hint of breathlessness in the man's tone. Fury welled under the carefully controlled words, simmering just below the surface.

"No, I don't think I will," the villain laughed, the black tendrils of his quirk whipping out and tightening around Izuku's broken leg. The teen screamed as he was pulled up into the air and hung upside down. Through tears and dirt and blood, Izuku saw Shouta's quirk-red eyes staring at him through his goggles. Rage. Caution. Worry. Rage at the villain's action. Caution against an unknown enemy. And worry. About him. *I'm just a worthless deku, can't stay safe like you asked me to.*

But Shouta was here. In this warehouse. And didn't that mean something? His frazzled mind couldn't think through the pain. Blood rushed to Izuku's head as he fought the waves of nausea rolling up his throat. His vision was narrowing, and he felt his chest heaving as he tried to get enough air. What felt like a thousand needles pierced through his leg where the multiple quirk-user held him aloft. The black tendril squeezed his broken bones, grinding them together in one agonizing motion. A scream echoed through the ruined warehouse. It was his.

Eraserhead dashed forward, his undone tie flying behind him as it was ripped from his collar. Silky gray cloth snapped forward, whipping out for All for One's leg while the other end darted for Izuku. The villain chuckled deeply, easily floating out of reach of the first and using his leverage on the teen to avoid the second.

"Come now, Eraserhead. Your Number One Hero couldn't even defeat me. What hope do you have?"

Shouta ignored the comment and continued the assault on the more powerful villain, darting around the battlefield nimbly despite the restrictive suit he wore. He jumped from ruined pillar to rubble-strewn floor like gravity was simply a nuisance to him, his lithe form becoming difficult to track with the rapid movements as he rained attacks down at the villain.

All for One crowed, "How long can you keep your eyes open for, hmm? I wager I'll find out soon, once young Midoriya here tears himself apart." His quirk—Forced Quirk Activation, Izuku remembered even as he cursed his ever quirk-focused mind—slammed into Izuku again. But again, nothing happened.

Several volleys passed viciously between the pair, gray cloth traded for large chunks of rock, eerie tendrils of black, and inhumane laughter. And all the while Izuku clung to consciousness like he clung to All Might's leg the first time he met him. Here though, the threat of death seemed so much larger.

*I have to get out of his grasp or I'm going to pass out,* Izuku told himself, ignoring the mocking, terrified voice in the back of his mind whispering that he was going to pass out anyway. Pushing through the pain and the continued darkening of his vision, Izuku toed at the black tendril holding him aloft with his good leg. It was solid. Casting his eyes around as his labored breathing sharpened in response to All for One's movement, he caught sight of a piece of rebar pointing

prominently from a block of crumbled cement. It was almost within reach. If he could just…reach…it…There!

Gritting his teeth and blinking away pained tears, Izuku positioned his good foot over the black tendril and *pushed* . Rubber sole scraped over broken and bruised skin. He turned his focus entirely on his arms, slowly pulling himself toward the concrete as the quirk-manifested tendril torturously slid off his agonized limb. *Just pull! Don't think about the pain…don't think about—!*

Relief washed over him as his leg was released from the grip of All for One, but it was quickly overcome with tormented aftershocks of pain. Breathing ragged, vision completely black, all Izuku could do was lay against the rubble and shudder against the overload of sensation. His ears rang, though it sounded far off, like through fuzzy earmuffs. He could feel the vibrations of battle through his back, which burned around his broken ribs and scraped skin.

*I'm going to die* . The thought floated through his head like a leaf on water. Calm, slow, and gentle. It didn't bring any fear. He didn't think he had any left. Regret, however, he had in spades. Regret that he wasn't a good son; regret that he could never become a hero; regret that All Might's power would die with him. Regret that he couldn't see Hizashi one last time. And Tofu. Regret that, after all Hizashi and Shouta did for him, all he could give in return was hassle and inconvenience. *Maybe the school will deal with my funeral so they don't have to…*

*"…kid…come on…"*

Words drifted in and out of focus. The voice was familiar, warm. He liked that voice.

" *…dammit!…wake…open…eyes!"*

Izuku tried. He really did. But the world remained stubbornly black.

" *Problem Child, you're not allowed to die on me!"*

Shouta? It had to be. No one else called him Problem Child. But he had to be imagining it.

*"Shit!"*

A large explosion rattled Izuku's teeth and jolted his broken bones. He gasped in pain, his bleary eyes flying open at the renewed torment of

his body. Dark eyes, completely bloodshot and irritated-looked, stared down at him with panic. Another explosion sent a cloud of dust over them both.

“Eraser, I can’t hold him off for long!” All Might. The voice was unmistakable, the hints of fear absolutely terrifying.

Shouta glanced at the other hero doing battle with All for One, then turned back to Izuku, dark eyes staring into his. “Izuku, I need you to listen to me. Do not. Fall. Asleep. Stay awake until I come get you again.”

Izuku barely managed to whisper a labored, “Okay…” before Shouta had his goggles over his eyes and was sprinting to join All Might. A wave of sadness washed over him as he watched Shouta leave. He knew he was being selfish, wanting him to stay when the greatest villain of the century was taking on All Might handily, but he couldn’t help it. He knew he was dying, no doubt about it. And he wanted some measure of comfort before he passed on. This was probably for the best. He didn’t deserve it, anyway. Just a worthless deku, like Bakugo said. *And a worthless hero. No wonder mom left. Who would want a useless son like me?*

All for One was winning. All Might didn’t have the strength left to continue this fight, and Eraserhead was no match against so many quirks, Izuku was sure. What did Shouta say during their twenty questions? Three quirks at a time put him in bed for a week? And there was no telling how many quirks All for One had. The villain already used at least ten, not to mention any quirks that acted more passively. He could have well over a hundred.

No. He wouldn’t allow them both to die for him. There was no point. No reason. He wasn’t worth saving.

All Might went in for a large punch, but was buffeted back by All for One’s many quirks. The skinny blond flew into a pillar and dropped to the ground, spitting up copious amounts of blood. Shouta took the opportunity to snap his capture weapon around All for One’s neck, but the villain easily flew out of the way, his counterattack striking Shouta in the chest and sending him to the ground. All for One advanced slowly as he held the Erasure Hero down by a black tendril.

“You have such a fantastic quirk, Eraserhead. It’s a shame we couldn’t harvest it from you when you were still in school.” The man clicked his tongue in annoyance, then sighed. “But that friend of yours.

Oboro? He did make such an excellent Nomu."

A fury filled yell echoed across the battleground as Shouta leapt forward with no concern for his own safety. All Might tried to dash in with him, but was slowed by his weakened state.

So, what could Izuku do? Shouta and Yagi-San were about to be killed, and he was painfully limp against the concrete block at his back. *Get All for One's attention* . He would kill Izuku and then Shouta and All Might could get away. It was the only thing he could do. *At least they'll be safe* , he thought as he raised his arm toward All for One. *Look at me* , he begged, though no sound left his cracked lips. *Leave them alone. It's me you want! LEAVE THEM ALONE!*

Green, whip-like appendages, so dark they were almost black, sprouted from Izuku's fingertips and instantly wrapped around All for One's chest, pinning his arms and pulling him back towards Izuku at a dizzying pace.

Izuku gaped at the curled tendrils connecting his bruised and dirtied hand to his impending demise. What *was* this? His mind instantly went into overdrive. *It can't be my quirk; I don't have one! It must be part of One for All somehow, but Yagi-san never used this. What's going on?*

The villain laughed as he was pulled away from Shouta. "I remember this quirk! Quite versatile. I never did take it from Daigoro, but I found something equivalent. Interesting that you can use it when All Might was unable."

Izuku's pained green eyes stared up in horror at the man rapidly approaching, pulled closer by, incredibly, Izuku's quirk. This was the plan, but now that it was working he was wholly unprepared to die. Fear spread like a wildfire throughout his entire body, rapidly overtaking his pained lethargy with the adrenaline-fueled urge to *run* . He quickly shuffled backwards with his one good leg, realizing in horror that he had All for One's full attention now.

*I'm going to die* . The thought was nowhere near the peaceful whisper it had been just moments before. Dying meant more pain, more suffering. Because All for One would not be satisfied with just killing him. He wanted to hurt Izuku. And in hurting Izuku, hurt All Might.

Izuku was afraid like he'd never been before. The USJ, the incident at the mall, the attack on the camp, everything paled in comparison to *this moment.* Face-to-face with the most powerful villain Japan had

ever seen. More powerful than the entirety of the top ten heroes combined. The man's eye-less face smiled with pure malice.

"Shall we try again, young Midoriya? Very well." He paused dramatically, then whispered, " *Forced Quirk Activation* ."

"Aizawa, NOW!"

All for One dropped to the ground instantly, his chest curling in on itself as he started coughing vigorously. His skin yellowed and his breathing became labored.

"What…" he coughed, "What is…?" He turned, freed from Izuku's whip-like quirk as he was from his own flight.

A voice echoed through the ruined warehouse, powerful, loud, and *enraged* . "UNITED!"

Izuku looked past All for One as a cloud of dust accumulated at the back of the rubble.

"STATES!"

All for One struggled to move, his focus now on the lone figure standing off to the side, glowing red eyes glaring daggers into the villain from behind dirty yellow goggles.

"OF!"

Breathing labored, his strength leaving him, All for One braced his hands on his knees as he finally turned to his enemy, a grimace twisting his already hideous face.

"SMAAAAAAAAAAAASH!"

Izuku's eyes snapped shut as a ferocious wind blasted past him, whipping his green curls to the side with such force he felt the hairs pulling at his scalp and his breath torn away from him. A sonic boom cracked across the warehouse, deafening in its volume and causing Izuku's entire body to vibrate. All for One crashed into the other side of the building, his impact so forceful it sent several waves of cement blocks raining down on him.

When Izuku could breathe again, he stared at the source of the all-powerful attack. Yagi-san, completely shrunken and his right arm clearly broken and bruised, stood in the center of a crater, which

Izuku could only assume was made by All Might himself. Blood dripped from the hero's chin as he stumbled forward, calling to Eraserhead, "He might— *ack!* He might have a…healing quirk." He panted heavily as he stumbled forward.

Izuku pushed himself up as much as he could, worried green eyes flickering from Yagi-san to Shouta. His stomach dropped. Blood ran in steady rivulets from both of Shouta's eyes as he glared unseeing into the pile of rubble where All for One lay. His eyes no longer showed white around the iris. Instead, a deep red filled the entire area, causing the red glow from his quirk to give him almost a demonic look.

All Might pulled a bit of rubble off All for One, then leaned down, two fingers outstretched as if to take a pulse. He hesitated, then glanced back at Shouta to confirm Erasure was still active. His fingers touched the exposed wrist of the villain and all three waited with bated breath.

It felt like an eternity while All Might crouched next to his greatest enemy. An endless, painful eternity. Finally, the Number One Hero stood. His deep set blue eyes stared over at Shouta as he nodded.

Red shifted to dark brown as Shouta began to sway, then dropped to his knees and vomited. Izuku wanted to help him, but his body felt like lead. He reached out his arm, hoping the green-black tendrils would help him as they did before, but only a slight tingle at his fingertips gave him any indication that the quirk had ever appeared to begin with.

Izuku must have made a noise loud enough to hear, because Shouta's head immediately shot up to look at him, and the ailing hero staggered over pieces of the broken ceiling to reach him. He slid to his knees quickly upon reaching Izuku and immediately pulled the teen to his chest. Warm air ruffled the green curls, and though the position was painful on his ribs, Izuku sunk into the comforting embrace.

"You're okay…you're okay…"

As Izuku drifted into unconsciousness, police sirens growing louder in his ears and dark drops of Shouta's blood dripping onto his shirt, he wondered if the man's words were meant to reassure him or Shouta.

—

Consciousness came and went, and time seemed boundless and at

once insignificant. Words were spoken, but nothing made sense in the dreamlike state he was in. Every once in a while, he'd feel small hands holding his, and what felt like a kiss on his knuckles. That couldn't be right though, who would want to kiss him? Mommy didn't even do that.

The kiss felt nice, but he was always so tired afterward. He was sure a lot of time passed after those kisses—voices changed, smells were different, and he always felt better—but he didn't know how much. It was meaningless in this gray-scape of infinitely shifting shapes.

Fingers tangled gently in his hair. A voice spoke to him. He recognized it, but couldn't place who it was or where he heard it before. It was telling him a story, he thought. Something about a cat and knocking all the pots off the counter. He wanted to smile and laugh, but he couldn't move.

The voice didn't seem to mind that he couldn't answer, it just continued.

"Damn that cat. Shou won't let me get one of those water spritzers to train her, says she's perfect how she is. It's a miracle she's litter trained," the voice laughed good-naturedly. "Maybe you can teach her to not mess up the kitchen, eyy kiddo? She might listen to you."

The voice paused, then sighed. "Please wake up, green bean. The apartment is real lonely without you there." There was a slight pressure against his head, like his mother kissing him before bed.

His heart ached.

—

The gray mist swirled around him again. He was missing time, he knew. No voices reached his muted ears, just a steady beeping noise that gave him pause. Why was that noise so familiar?

He took stock. His head no longer felt like lead and his chest didn't burn with each rising of his chest. One of his legs felt too heavy.

His arms lay free on top of a soft blanket. He relished the feeling under his fingers, twitching them back and forth to enjoy the texture. It felt familiarly soft.

He tried to pull in a deep breath, but found something fighting him. Forcing him to breathe evenly. He twitched his nose. Something there.

Over his mouth too.

Midway through his investigation, he heard a door open loudly, and hushed voices whispering harshly.

“Aizawa Shouta, you get back in this wheelchair or so help me!”

“No,” a deeper voice grunted. “I can walk by my own damn self, ‘Zashi.”

“You can’t see, you dumb ass. You hear me?”

“I hear you just fine. I’m not sitting in a wheelchair.”

A put-upon sigh sounded in the room, then the door shut gently. “Fine. You know what? I don’t care. Bonk your head on a wall while you’re all independent, see if it helps you.”

“‘Zashi, quit being dramatic. It’s not like I’m completely blind. I can see through the bandages.”

The other voice exited whispering to shriek, “Shut your damn eyes, you stubborn—“

Both men quieted as Izuku let out a muffled snort.

“Was that—?”

“Problem Child, can you hear me?”

He tried to speak, but found his jaw nearly impossible to move. He grunted instead, hoping it sounded enough like an affirmation.

“Oh my god! Izu, baby, are you awake? Can you open your eyes?”

He tried. His eyelids were slow and sluggish to respond, and he only got one up. The room was dim, the overhead lights off and the blinds closed. To his right, Hizashi leaned against the railing of what he recognized vaguely as a hospital bed. The man nearly fell to the ground in excitement when they locked eyes.

“My kiddo’s awake! Oh my god I have to find the doctor! Shou, watch over—I mean—keep an eye—you know what I mean!” Hizashi ran out the door shouting happily for the doctor as Izuku managed to get his other eye open.

Shouta, dressed in a hospital gown with bandages wrapped over his

eyes, sat in a chair next to him. The whole scene was surreal. It was like they were back in the hospital after Izuku's injury during the practical exam.

The underground hero reached up and pulled his bandage away from his face long enough to get a good look at Izuku's tired but conscious eyes before settling the fabric back over his cheekbone. The man reached out a hand and squeezed Izuku's.

"Hey kid, hope you slept well."

Izuku giggled quietly, and the man's stern lips twisted up into a smile.

Chapter End Notes

Hello again all! So glad to be back into the swing of things and writing these horribly fun chapters! (Horrible for you, fun for me <3 ). Izuku will eventually catch a break, but NOT TODAY!

Thanks for everyone that commented on the last chapter and encouraged me to keep going and take care of myself. You all are the best, and I love each and every one of you!

Until next chapter! Don't kill me for the endless cliffhangers!

—

Want to write and discuss fanfiction and other nerdy endeavors with like-minded individuals? Come join my discord! https://discord.gg/6vfCJQ88et

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku gazed tiredly at the window of his hospital room. The blinds were closed tightly, and an orderly kindly put up a sheet to block out more of the light. Shouta napped quietly to the side on his own bed, which he forcefully ordered the nurses to bring up to Izuku's room shortly after the teen woke from his coma.

*Three weeks* , Izuku thought. *I lost three weeks after the fight in Kamino ward.* Apparently, shortly after Shouta and Yagi-san killed All for One, All Might's greatest enemy and the most powerful villain in Japan, Izuku passed out from blood loss in Shouta's arms. The man, bleeding from his eyes and barely able to see, got him to an ambulance, checked into the emergency room, and through a major surgery before finally falling over from quirk exhaustion. Shouta spent a week unconscious while Recovery Girl did her best to heal his eyes, and Izuku entered a coma after his surgery.

The way Hizashi told the story made it seem like he knew they both would be just fine the whole time. Izuku and Shouta had their own doubts, many of them based on the tender way the nurses acted around the blond man. Knowing the exuberant but highly emotionally-driven radio host, they assumed he was a blubbering mess the entire time. Hizashi denied it vehemently, but the slight sheen to his eyes all but confirmed it.

The lump in his stomach, which was present ever since he'd woken two weeks ago, clenched at the thought of Hizashi in such distress. *But,* he thought, *if someone I loved nearly went blind from a vicious villain attack, I'd feel the same.*

Izuku took a deep breath, relishing in the freedom of not having bandages around his ribs anymore. Recovery Girl's prowess at healing remained unsurpassed, and Izuku vowed to buy her dinner every day for the rest of his life once he got a job. He would be dead long before now if it wasn't for her, no doubt about it.

His gaze landed on the pile of get-well cards, balloons, and gifts layered over his bedside table. Most were from his classmates, all wishing him a swift recovery and exclaiming over the battle in

Kamino Ward. One card lay open with a long message from Yagi-san in it, which he delivered himself along with one of the rarer All Might action figures. And his favorite, the drawing from Kota's coloring book with both of them using their quirks. Kota even wrote 'GET WELL SOON, IZU-CHAN' in shaky crayon.

Shouta shifted on his bed, grunting in his sleep and frowning behind his bandages. Izuku watched him for a moment, before turning back to the window as he became lost in thought again.

It didn't take long after waking from his coma for Izuku to realize just how much his hospital stay was going to cost. Five weeks in a hospital room, two major surgeries and one minor one, and two weeks of physical therapy already. He was scheduled to see Recovery Girl once a week in addition to all that. And that wasn't counting the meals, the bandages, the cast on his left leg. He didn't care what Hizashi said, this was all far too much to spend on someone like himself. No amount of 'duty' or 'responsibility' on their part could be worth the trouble he caused.

The door clicked open quietly. Hizashi's blond mess of a bun walked into the room backwards, pulling a wheelchair behind him. He smiled brightly, signing, 'Good morning, green bean!'

Izuku smiled tiredly back and returned the greeting with his hands. It was much easier to do, now that his arm was free of the cast.

Hizashi wheeled the chair over to his bed and examined the small bag of items by Izuku's feet. "Got everything?" he whispered, eyes darting over to Shouta.

The teen nodded, his long curls bouncing with the motion. He reached over to pull the folded All Might blanket to his chest and slipped off the bed, landing on his good leg as he pivoted into the wheelchair. Hizashi lifted his backpack from the ground and looped the straps over the handles.

"I got you all checked out at the front desk, so we're good to go, kiddo." Hizashi pulled him backwards and angled him toward the door.

Before they could leave the room, Izuku turned to look at Shouta's sleeping form. "Aren't we going to say goodbye to Shouta?" He asked, green eyes watching the too-still man on the bed with worry. Two weeks in a hospital room with his homeroom teacher taught him a lot about the man's habits, both sleeping and awake.

“Ah,” Hizashi glanced at his husband, “Well, if we do he—”

“He might think it’s rude to take Izuku home without informing me.” Shouta sat, his eyes covered but nonetheless glaring at the other hero. “Or asking for permission.”

Hizashi sighed, rolling his eyes playfully at Izuku before turning. “Shouta! You’re awake!”

“Hizashi,” Shouta intoned cooly, standing from his cot and bending over carefully to pick up his own bag, which Izuku watched him packing earlier. The green-haired teen tried to hide his smile, but realized quickly that he was doing a bad job when Hizashi continuously glanced back and forth between the two of them, a frown growing between his eyebrows.

“Shou, you won him over, didn’t you! You turned him against me!” Hizashi turned back to Izuku, a dramatically betrayed look in his eye. “Izu, how could you tell him my plan! I thought we had a deal!”

Izuku bit his lip to hold in his laughter, but couldn’t contain it. He burst out, “I’m sorry! He overheard us talking and said he’d buy us all ice cream if I went along with it!”

Hizashi turned to the black-haired man, who was walking confidently toward them by the door. “Bribery! To think you’d stoop so low!”

“Are you going to deny yourself free ice cream?” Shouta asked as he passed Izuku, ruffling the teen’s hair as he did. Despite the bandages, which at this point were more to keep light out than to heal his eyes, Shouta easily opened the door and stepped into the hallway with sure steps. “Coming?” He questioned.

Hizashi sputtered for a moment, “I—you—What kind of ice—No! Shou, you’re supposed to stay here for another few days!”

The Erasure Hero shrugged, “Too bad. I checked myself out this morning.”

Hizashi gave Shouta a death glare before huffing and pushing Izuku’s wheelchair forward. “Fine! But I want the fancy stuff! With sprinkles and everything!”

“Only you would call sprinkles ‘fancy’…” Shouta mumbled as they walked down the hallway to the elevator.

Izuku smiled at their antics, enjoying the feeling for a few moments longer than he thought he should. If everything went right, he'd be out on his own again soon. He wouldn't bother them anymore, invade their home, cost them so much money. As soon as he could walk again, Izuku would go.

True to his word, Shouta paid for them to all get ice cream on the way back to the heroes' apartment. Izuku, unsure what he even liked, got an orange-colored cone that claimed to taste like melon. He let Hizashi put sprinkles over it and a tiny wafer stick right in the middle. While they sat in the car for the remainder of the ride, Izuku silently ate the treat. Ice cream was a rarity with his mother unless it was either of their birthdays. And even then it was typically vanilla or chocolate flavored.

"Your friends left a ton of get-well gifts on your desk at UA," Hizashi called from the front seat. "I didn't bring them to the hospital because some were huge. They're on your bed, but it's completely covered, ya dig?" He turned to look at Shouta, who's chair was leaned back as much as it could be in the car. Sunglasses replaced the hospital bandages and he slowly ate his cup of ice cream with a spoon. "You've got some too, grumpy."

Grunting, the dark-haired man replied, "If it's from Nemuri I don't want it."

"But she gave you the biggest one!"

"Exactly. I don't want to know what she put in that box."

"I-isn't that Midnight?" Izuku tentatively asked, looking between the two.

"That's Midnight," they both groaned.

Hizashi continued, "You're probably right though. Remember what she gave us last time?"

"I try every day to forget," Shouta scoffed, scooping another bite of his coffee ice-cream onto his spoon.

The rest of the drive continued with the two men bantering back and forth, and Izuku asking a question every once-in-a-while. He tried to stay quiet, to not bother them. He would miss this, he knew. Would miss the casual conversations, 20 questions at dinner, movie nights on the couch, playing with Tofu. In the short time Izuku lived with his

two favorite teachers, he learned so much of what a home life should be like: filled with laughter and love. He felt, more than ever, like an intruder. An unwelcome spectator.

*As soon as this cast is off. I'll leave them alone. They don't want me around anyway, not with as much of a mess as I've caused. Look at Kamino Ward, look at the camp! They wanted me and Kaachan, but I'm the one that made the damage so much worse. I'll just keep causing them problems if I stay.*

The trio slowly worked their way out of the car and into the elevator. Izuku let Hizashi help him maneuver his wheelchair into the elevator as he still didn't have the hang of it. He remained silent as they entered the apartment, only cooing at Tofu as she leapt up into his lap.

When Hizashi opened the door to the spare bedroom, Izuku's eyes nearly popped out of his head. The bed was piled with gifts and balloons. He spied at least three things he guessed were from Ochaco, another two from Tenya, and a few smaller things from almost all of his classmates, including those from Class 1-B. As he sifted through everything, he felt a great wave of emotion wash over him.

*I can't take this with me. I don't have a house to go back to anymore, not after I let Aizawa-sensei and Yamada-sensei have their lives back.* Tear tracked down his freckled cheeks as his heart clenched.

"Shou, don't hurt yourself—You okay, kiddo?" Hizashi stepped up next to his wheelchair, leaning down to get a better look at Izuku's face. The teen wiped his tears away with his sleeve and smiled up at the green-eyed man.

"Y-yeah! I…I guess it's j-just really n-nice of…of everyone."

Hizashi smiled, patting his back. "Your classmates were really worried about you. Once they heard you were going to be okay, all this started piling up on your desk. Take some time, ya dig? I'm sure they have some really nice words in those cards."

Izuku nodded, reaching for the first thing he could grab. A teddy bear wearing All Might's hero costume. It was holding a card with his own name printed on the front in Ochaco's handwriting. Taking a breath to steel himself against his emotions, he began working through his classmates' cards.

—

Three more weeks. That's how long it took for Recovery Girl to declare him able to walk. Three weeks to plan where he would go, what to take, and how to survive without a roof over his head. Hizashi very kindly let him borrow his laptop for school research, so finding shelters and how to make cheap food was easy enough to look up.

He wasn't allowed to participate in any heroics classes with his leg broken, but he and Shouta would sit off to the side while Vlad or Midnight were teaching and discuss his unfinished analyses from the camp.

"What about support gear for Uravity?"

"She g-gets sick when she's floating. I t-think it's her internal balance. Maybe something using a g-gyrosphere to keep her steady?"

"Not bad. What about Todoroki?"

And so it went. Three weeks of hero analysis and studies. Izuku would be lying if he said it wasn't some of the best weeks he'd ever spent in school. Shouta seemed to actually take his thoughts into account and frequently had Izuku go with his classmates to the support shop to describe the gear they needed.

When they weren't at school, the three of them were comfortably watching movies or talking at Shouta and Hizashi's apartment. Izuku wanted those moments to last forever. He tried to imprint them in his mind to revisit later, when he was out on his own again.

That night Hizashi baked a large fish and cooked a variety of vegetables for sides. They sat at the small table in content conversation while they ate. Izuku cherished the moment. The lump in his gut was growing the longer he stayed, but he truly would miss living here with his teachers. *I've never felt more cared for in my life, and they don't even know me that well! It's best if I leave though. They're wasting too much of their time on me. I'll go back to just being a student to them, nothing more.*

Tofu nuzzled up to his leg as he finished his meal. Izuku ran two scarred fingers down her back as he committed the softness of her fur to memory.

"—you think, Izu?"

Hearing Hizashi's nickname for him, Izuku looked up, green eyes wide at being addressed. "Oh, um, s-sorry. What did y-you say?"

Hizashi smiled. “I was saying, it would be fun if you came with me to my radio show sometime. We have a segment every other week where we discuss heroes, and I thought it would be rad to have you talking mad analytics! Ya dig?”

Izuku was floored. He knew the segment well, it was one of his favorites after all. But to be part of it? Be the one discussing heroes with Present Mic? It was too much. He was being too kind. Offering Izuku too many favors. *This is more than I deserve. Why are they so nice to me? I’m so useless I got kidnapped and half a city district got destroyed!*

Izuku swallowed, then replied, “I-I don’t th-think that’s a g-good idea. M-my analysis is u-useless anyway. Just a h-hobby.”

“Nonsense!” Hizashi exclaimed as Shouta shot Izuku a look that he couldn’t discern. “It’s the talk of the staff right now! Even Nedzu is impressed. We gotta get you on the show, kiddo! It’ll be perfect! Show off those skills and wow the country, ya dig?”

Bringing his hands up as if to ward away the over-exuberance, Izuku grimaced and tried to disguise it as a smile. “I-I don’t w-want to embarrass m-myself is all! I’ll th-think on it!”

Hizashi pumped the air with his fist. “That’s the spirit kid! Radio is great for stage fright anyway! No one can see you but me!”

Izuku nodded as he shoved the last bite of food into his mouth as an excuse to stop talking. He pointedly stared down at his plate for the rest of dinner and retreated to the spare room instead of staying for the movie, feigning tiredness.

Once the door was shut behind him, he slumped against it, staring at his belongings lining the walls. His classmates bombarded him with posters, figures, and anything else related to heroes. Someone must have told them what he liked, because there was very little deviation from the heroic theme. Ochaco and Tenya both got him All Might merchandise along with the very heartfelt cards he stuffed into his backpack. Those were coming with him, but the rest of the gifts were too much for him to carry.

Izuku stood straight again, walking over to his desk, where the note he intended to leave Shouta and Hizashi lay. Three or four revisions of the note lay crumpled in the wastebasket, bogged down with tears and spelling mistakes. He wanted the note to be perfect, even though Izuku certainly wasn’t. At least he should leave a good impression. They would still be his teachers afterall, even when he didn’t live with

them anymore.

Izuku was certain they would appreciate the effort he put into paying them back. He had a listing of the prices all the merchandise would go for, as well as where to sell them. He even included what remained of his All Might collection, though he selfishly kept the priceless blanket from Yagi-san. It was tucked into his backpack as well as his school things, and several changes of clothes. That's all he had room for, however.

The freckled teen slid onto the bed, his previously broken leg still tender and sore, despite Recovery Girl's administrations. He couldn't stand on it for long without getting tired. He hoped he was recovered enough to walk to the shelter he had picked out. It was a few miles away, nearly an hour on foot. He didn't have money to spare for a train, not if he was going to feed himself.

He sat on his bed thinking for several hours as the sun set and turned to an inky black night. A slight chill was in the air, and, not for the first time, Izuku wished his favorite All Might hoodie wasn't ruined at the camp and subsequent kidnapping. His blanket would be warm enough for now, but he would need a winter coat sooner than later.

Realizing it was time, Izuku slipped on his red boots—new, because his original ones were burned, ripped, and partially melted—and quietly secured his backpack around his shoulders. He tiptoed to the door, pausing before opening it to hear if Shouta or Hizashi were still up and about. It was quiet. Not even Tofu's padding steps could be heard. Izuku turned the handle slowly, cringing at the slight squeak it made, before carefully pulling the door open. It was clear. He leaned back toward his desk, gently dropping his apartment key on top of the note which read 'Aizawa- and Yamada-sensei'.

He slipped out of the house with ease, his new shoes not making any noise against the carpeted hallway outside the apartment. Once the front door shut with a soft click, Izuku hurried to the elevator, taking it down to the first floor. He felt the temperature dropping as he approached the building's main doors and immediately started shivering as he walked outside into the still night. Goose Pimples rose all along his arms. He crossed them tightly to his chest, hoping he would warm up as he walked.

He followed the main street down to an intersection, then swung right and padded down the lit sidewalk for nearly ten minutes. He passed the ramen shop Shouta took him to before the camp and smiled. The

shop was among his favorite places now. It was a shame he wouldn't be able to frequent there until he had a job. The savory noodles sounded like heaven in the chill of autumn.

He continued walking, his eyes up and alert for anyone looking to steal from him. Now that he only had what he could carry, he was far more cautious about his safety. His whole livelihood was stuffed into his yellow backpack. Losing it would mean more than just losing a precious blanket and some books.

His feet went on autopilot as he wandered down the streets he was beginning to recognize again. The shelter he intended to stay at wasn't too far from his old apartment, though it was difficult to get to from there. His route from Shouta and Hizashi's home was far more straightforward. Walk one mile down 21st street, turn left, turn right at the stoplight, go over the bridge…

Izuku yawned, his breath coming out like foggy puffs in the chill. He was very cold. It was well past midnight, and the temperature was getting to its lowest point of the day. *Should I get out my blanket? No, I'm almost there. And I don't want it stolen.*

The teen found himself staring at the bridge he had to walk over. It was small, no more than a two lane road that it supported. It was dark on the sidewalk. He was in a part of town that had few, if any, street lamps. Cursing his frozen fingers, Izuku scrambled for his phone's flashlight. His numb appendages failed him, and he dropped the phone onto the ground. A loud crack echoed in the still night. Wincing, Izuku held the screen up to the pale light of the moon, groaning when he saw the spider webbing crack across the glass.

"I think this is far enough, Problem Child."

Not expecting the voice—and not expecting to recognize the voice—Izuku jumped, his phone falling from his fingers again and landing by his booted foot. He turned quickly, feeling a twinge in his already sore leg.

Shouta leaned against one of the only street lamps on the street. It was dim, and flickered every once-in-a-while, but it was enough to cause the man's still light-sensitive eyes to narrow in agitation. The hero stared at Izuku with an inscrutable look as he took in the teen's shivering form.

The pair watched each other, both not moving or speaking. Izuku, heart still pounding, tried to speak but found he couldn't. Shouta

merely quirked an eyebrow at the continued silence.

“You’re freezing, kid. Why didn’t you bring a jacket?”

“M-my hoodie is…and I…” Izuku tried to explain, but that tightness in his stomach was returning. He didn’t want Shouta and Hizashi to follow him, or even know he was gone until the morning. This wasn’t supposed to happen this way. They were supposed to find him gone, sell his stuff, and get on with their lives like he never intruded on them!

Shouta sighed, holding out his arm. Slung around his wrist was the Present Mic hoodie Izuku borrowed during camp. He wanted to take it, *oh he wanted to take it* , but he restrained himself. The whole point was to stop imposing on Shouta and Hizashi. Taking his hoodie was the opposite of that. *I’m fine. I’m almost there, anyway.*

“Oh, um…that’s o-okay. I’m good.” He cursed himself as Shouta raised a tired eyebrow.

“No, you’re not. I can see you shivering. We’re about to have a conversation, and I don’t need you freezing on me.” His dark eyes showed his serious, no nonsense attitude he used in class when instructing them on new heroics techniques. Izuku complied immediately, putting his backpack gently on the ground before slipping the hoodie over his chilled skin. The change was immediate, and he felt his shiver calm until he was warm again. He bit his lip as Shouta took his backpack and walked back the way Izuku came from.

The teen followed, his green eyes filled with worry about this ‘conversation.’ What would Shouta want to talk about? Couldn’t he see what Izuku was doing was the best course of action? It would be better this way, it truly would.

Shouta led them to the edge of a small park. Light from a late-night cafe streamed over the grassy lawn and caused their shadows to look long and menacing. The pair were quiet for several moments while Izuku waited for Shouta to start. If he had it his way, he would already be tucked into a cot at the shelter.

“Did we do something wrong?”

Izuku breathed in quickly at the question, turning to look up at his teacher, who was staring out into the dark side of the park.

“N-no!” Izuku stuttered, wondering how Shouta could have ever come

to that conclusion. He and Hizashi were the best people he knew.

“Then why did you run away?”

Izuku stumbled over his words trying to explain himself. “It’s nothing y-you did! It’s me! I-I’m such trouble to k-keep around. I d-didn’t want to inconvenience you both by s-staying!”

Shouta sighed, “There’s that ‘inconvenience’ word again. Is that one you like or was it your mother who taught you?”

Izuku’s brow furrowed. “I-I don’t know…what you mean.”

Shouta pinched the bridge of his nose tightly, then turned to look Izuku directly in the eye. The pupil of his right eye, the one damaged in the USJ attack, was slightly hazy, but otherwise no outward sign of his extreme quirk exhaustion could be seen. He watched Izuku for a moment before responding, “I want to know who told you you were an inconvenience. Because I know it isn’t myself or Hizashi. I can only guess it was your mother.”

“Sh-she never…I *am* an inconvenience! I-I keep getting hurt, a-and I’m in the w-way all the time! I…I just—“

“Just what?” Shouta interrupted. “Thought leaving in the dead of night wouldn’t worry either of us? That because your mother gave you so little sense of self-worth that we wouldn’t care if you just disappeared?”

Izuku was shocked. Despite Shouta’s harsh demeanor at school, he never seemed truly angry. Here he was though.

The hero sighed, rubbed his face, and pinched the bridge of his nose. He mumbled, “Sorry. I shouldn’t raise my voice at you.”

Izuku didn’t know what to say. He hung his head, green eyes looking down at his shoes. His mother yelled at him plenty of times before. Teachers yelled at him all the time in middle school. Yet, somehow, Shouta yelling at him felt so much worse. He felt tears welling in his eyes and tried to keep his sniffles hidden.

Shouta sighed again, then reached down to tilt Izuku’s face up. Izuku didn’t let him, tilting his head to the side to keep his eyes averted. The man paused for a moment, then reached into his own jacket to pull out a paper. It was the note Izuku left on the desk in his room.

“Izuku,” he started, voice unsteady as he unfolded the note. “I need to know what you intended with this note.”

The teen wiped his nose with the back of his hand, sniffling and still not meeting Shouta’s eye. “I-I just w-wanted to…” He swallowed around the lump in his throat. “To th-thank you a-and to let you know h-how to s-sell everything a-and…”

“And what?” Shouta asked gently, crouching down so he was below Izuku’s eye level. Izuku didn’t know how to answer so he just shook his head, shoving his hands deep into the front pocket of his borrowed hoodie. The man looked back at the bridge Izuku had been about to cross. “Were you going to jump off?”

Izuku, shocked at the accusation, looked up, locking eyes with his homeroom teacher. “N-No!” He denied. The thought hadn’t crossed his mind during his planning. He wanted to be a hero. He wanted to keep going. He just…didn’t want to be in Shouta and Hizashi’s way.

Shouta held up the note, “Do you see why this note could sound like maybe you were going to?”

Izuku looked at the lines he slaved over for hours this week, thinking of them from this new perspective. He could see it. He absolutely could. The hints of finality that he intended to end the guardian-child relationship he had with the pair of heroes took on a whole new meaning.

*‘…don’t worry about me anymore…’*

*‘…you can give the extra things in my room back to my classmates…’*

“Th-that’s not what I-I meant,” he quietly protested. “I d-don’t want to…to…”

“So, if it wasn’t to end your life, why are you out here?” Shouta’s dark eyes seemed to soften at Izuku’s honesty, like a great weight was lifted from his shoulders. “It’s freezing, dark, and doesn’t have any cats. I don’t see the point.”

Izuku quirked a tiny smile at Shouta’s joke, then sobered. “L-like I said, I’m a h-hassle. I…I’ve taken t-too much from you both already. It w-would be easier for you if I w-wasn’t there.”

“Easier…” Shouta mumbled as he stood again, tucking the note into his jacket. “So…what? You just run away and go back to school like

nothing happened? Or did you think we wouldn't immediately take you back home?"

Izuku stuttered over a response, but couldn't find the words. It sounded, as ridiculous as the idea was, that Shouta *wanted* him in his apartment. The idea was stupid, of course. Why would Shouta want him invading his and Hizashi's privacy? The apartment was *their* home, not Izuku's. Tofu had more claim on that space than he did.

"Do you not consider our apartment to be your home?" Shouta asked, a hint of some unknown emotion lacing his voice.

Izuku slapped a hand over his mouth, realizing he, once again, was mumbling aloud. His green eyes stared up in horror as Shouta watched him carefully. "I…I…" He didn't know what to say. Embarrassment, horror, shock, every horrible feeling under the sun ran through his chest.

"If you don't want to be with us, there are other options we can consider," Shouta pulled out a wad of papers from his other jacket pocket and handed them to Izuku. "I was hoping to go through these with you at dinner, but you seemed out of it, so I waited. Clearly that was the wrong choice."

Izuku scrambled to hold onto the loose sheets with his cold fingers. Shouta pulled him over to a bench and sat him down. His homeroom teacher still had an odd look and tone. "Take a look at those, tell me if there's one you like."

Izuku looked down at the papers, confused. The light from a nearby streetlamp was enough to read the bold print at the top of each sheet: *Fostercare Transfer.* The teen swallowed, a lump forming in his throat and not going away. Somehow, this was worse than simply leaving. *They're trying to get rid of me? I knew I was too much for them. I'm so worthless. No one would want a deku like me!*

He shuffled through a few of the forms, reading the names at the top of each. Most he didn't recognize, but he found one he did. *Bakugo Mitsuki and Bakugo Masaru* . He paused on this one, and Shouta looked over his shoulder.

"Unless I was mistaken, I went ahead and said 'no' to that particular form for you."

Izuku felt his shoulders relax from the tense position he didn't realize they had been in. Auntie Mitsuki was nice, and Uncle Masaru was a

great person, but…he didn't think he could live around Kaachan. Especially after yelling at him. Izuku shook his curly head and continued.

"I…Do I h-have to go with one of th-these?" Izuku asked, green eyes searching Shouta's dark brown ones. That strange look was still there. "I can j-just go to the sh-shelter like I planned…"

Shouta breathed deeply, then nodded to the papers. "Why don't you finish reading through those, then we'll talk."

Izuku nodded, tired eyes glancing at the names on the various transfer forms. No familiar names jumped out at him. Finally, after several minutes reading in the dark, he got to the last page. At the top, the bold words *Petition for Adoption* emblazoned the headline. Shocked that anyone would bother to put in this kind of paperwork, Izuku immediately read the name of the petitioner. They had already signed at the bottom of the page, next to a single blank line for his own signature.

*Aizawa Shouta*

The teen froze, his brain short-circuiting faster than Kaminari on a training day. Slowly turning to look up at Shouta, Izuku asked, "W-what's this?"

The pro hero shifted his stance and Izuku finally recognized the emotion in Shouta's eyes. The man was nervous.

"It's an adoption paper," the older man stated casually.

"B-but, it has your name on it!" Izuku protested, setting the other forms aside and standing with the offending paper in hand.

"It does. I'd like it to have your name on it too." Shouta didn't move from his relaxed position against the light post, simply folding his arms and watching Izuku's reaction.

Izuku looked down at the form, not believing what he saw written there. *Aizawa Shouta* . In his teacher's scratchy handwriting. And beside it, *Midoriya Izuku* , written in plain print next to a blank line for a signature. It was dated this morning. Feeling emotion well within him, Izuku sniffed as his eyes dripped tears again. "You…you can't mean this. Right? It's a j-joke?" *Please don't be a joke please don't be a joke!*

Shouta's eyes narrowed, "Kid, I would never joke about something like this." He paused, taking in Izuku's tears. "If it's something you don't want, then—"

"Of *course* I want it!" Izuku interrupted, then slapped a hand over his mouth. The dark-haired man relaxed, his eyes softening as he waited for Izuku to get over his embarrassment.

"Then what's your answer?"

"I-I…You can't possibly w-want to…to adopt me! I'm so m-much trouble! And I'm useless, and I—" Izuku knew he shouldn't, knew it was supposed to be a secret. But if Shouta was really thinking, really wanting, to adopt him, he had to know! It had to be said. "You don't want me," Izuku hung his head. It was difficult to say, but necessary. "I'm quirkless."

Shouta laughed, "I have several months of training you that proves that to be false, kid." His expression turned serious when he spotted Izuku's continued nervousness. "What's wrong?"

*Just blurt it out, pretend you're just thinking but forget to stop your mouth from moving. That will work. Idiot, you shouldn't have said anything!* Knowing he had no other options now, Izuku started from the beginning. That fateful day of Aldera Middle School, leading to the slime villain attack and his first ever meeting with All Might. He left nothing out. Shouta listened intently, eyes widening in realization as Izuku described how All Might's quirk, One for All, worked.

Shouta eyed the teen as he contemplated what he just learned, his expression giving away nothing. The silence stretched out, getting longer and longer. Izuku bit his lip as he dropped his gaze to his boots.

Shouta's warm voice asked, "And you think that makes a difference to me?"

Izuku gasped, his head snapping back so rapidly he knew he'd wake with a headache in the morning. His green eyes searched Shouta's desperately, his mind railing against his words with disbelief.

"D-Doesn't it?" Izuku asked, heart thumping with a tiny kindling of hope.

Shouta lifted an eyebrow, shaking his head slowly. Reaching down to tap at the empty signature line on the adoption paperwork, he asked,

“My answer hasn’t changed. What’s yours?”

Izuku’s chin wobbled as his eyes clouded over with tears. He glanced down at the paper, Shouta’s name just under his own, then he felt his emotions overwhelm him. He sobbed happily, unable to keep the smile off his face as he launched himself at Shouta, wrapping his arms around the man’s thin, sturdy frame and clutching the precious paper in his hands.

Shouta pulled him in closer, crushing him against his chest as the young teen shook with emotion. “I’ll take that as a yes,” he chuckled as Izuku nodded rapidly against his hoodie, soaking it with happy tears. “Let’s go home then. You’re still frozen.”

Izuku let out a shaky, “Y-yeah,” before following Shouta back the way they came. Shouta took a much more direct route than the teen, probably knowing the back alleys well enough that he didn’t need to use the main streets. They arrived back at the apartment, *our apartment* Izuku reminded himself, and Shouta held out the key Izuku left on his desk.

“Go on,” he gestured at the door. “I think Hizashi has a surprise for you.”

Nodding happily and wondering why Hizashi was still awake, Izuku fumbled with the key and opened the door. Light spilled down the hallway from the living room, as well as cursing and fussing. Wiping his cheeks and glancing at Shouta for reassurance, he stepped forward past *his* bedroom and into the living room.

Hizashi stood with his back to him huffing as he shifted a pile of *something* . Izuku cleared his throat as he peeked around the corner. The blond jumped, whirling around and spreading his hands out behind him to cover whatever it was he was working on.

The Voice Hero’s yellow-green eyes glanced between Izuku and Shouta rapidly before a wide grin spread across his excited face. He took a deep breath, “SURPrise!” He jumped to the side, glaring at Shouta for canceling his quirk and tossing his arms out in presentation.

Izuku smiled at his antics, then his green eyes drifted over to the coffee table. His jaw dropped. The table, the floor, and the couch was *covered* in All Might merch. As the freckled teen looked, he realized it wasn’t just any All Might merch. It was *his* . All *his* posters, complete with signatures. All *his* figures, with the dents and scratches of his

youth. All *his* shirts, plushies, dinnerware. *All of it* . Here, in Shouta and Hizashi's living room.

Mouth agape, Izuku walked forward, fingers itching to touch everything and assure himself it was real. "H-how?" He turned to Hizashi and Shouta, who were both smiling at him.

Hizashi spread his arms wide, his grin contagious and huge. "Welcome to the family, green bean!"

Whether Hizashi and Izuku burst into blubbering tears is a secret Shouta swore to take to the grave. If their eyes were red the next morning when they all woke up for pancakes and couch cuddles? Well, that was a different story.

Chapter End Notes

> And welcome back to another installment of "How did this story get so dark again?" Thanks all of you for sticking with me while I work through some of my own issues and take enormous breaks from writing. I'll be happy to let you know that I've had somewhat of a breakthrough and hopefully have worked through some major stressors that were keeping me from writing, so I'm hopeful that I'll have a more regular schedule as we get towards the end of this story.
>
> Again, I can't thank you all enough for your support and love for this story. I promise I read every comment and obsess over all the kudos, so don't think your contribution is overlooked! I love you all and hope everything is going good in your lives (or at least better than what I'm putting Izuku through). ;)
>
> Until next chapter!
>
> —
>
> Want to hang out in a community of people who like fanfics too? Come join my discord! We talk about anime, fanfics, and anything under the sun (with bonus pet pictures from everyone in the server). Link: https://discord.gg/QMTMCtcA8D
>
> --
>
> EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Aizawa sighed irritatedly as he waited in the wings for Class 3-B to finish their graduation ceremony. Vlad's smug face was too annoying to deal with even on a good day, and final graduation was more stressful than almost any other day of the year.

The last student was called, and Nedzu congratulated Class 3-B on graduating their hero training, all becoming great heroes with bright futures, blah blah-blah blah-blah. Finally, the rat announced Class 3-A, Heroics.

Aizawa stepped forward, glaring into the bright sun that still gave him pause even two years later. Clearing his throat and trying to ignore the discomfort, he ascended the steps of the stage to stand by the principal. The mouse smiled up at him, then handed him the first graduation certificate and pro hero license.

"Aoyama Yuga," Nedzu started, watching the blond step forward in his formal UA uniform. They bowed and Aizawa passed him his hero license. The rest of the class followed in the same fashion, Nedzu calling their name and Aizawa giving them their licenses. The homeroom teacher suffered in silence, his only solace knowing that only 20 students were in his class, and taking strength from Hizashi's bright face over by Class 3-C.

Finally, the name Shouta was waiting for was next. His dark eyes picked the head of green curls out from the remaining students. The excited green eyes shining out from a freckled face that still hadn't lost its baby fat met his own dark ones. He could see the kid basically vibrating in anticipation.

Shouta took the graduation certificate and hero license from Nedzu's paws, standing straight and waiting. He glanced down at the license, showing the same bright eyes glittering from the masked face he could recognize anywhere. Warmth welled in his chest as he looked up once again for Nedzu to speak.

And if he cracked a smile when the rat announced, "Aizawa Izuku," over the microphone? Well, that was his business.

Chapter End Notes

And here is where this story ends. Thank you all for sticking with me through this story and being so supportive! Y'all kept me floating whenever I thought I should stop. I hope this was enjoyable and not too crazy for you! Please, be safe, be loved, be good.

There is an epilogue for this story, and I have several 'shorts' planned for scenes that didn't fit into this story but I nonetheless wanted to show. They'll be added at the end of this story so you can find everything in one place. :)

Thank you all again! I hope to see you in the next one! :D

—

Want to see what's coming up next? Join my discord! https://discord.gg/6vfCJQ88et

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EDIT: This story has been edited from its original posting. You may find older comments and my chapter notes don't line up with the chapters anymore. That's okay. It's by design. Enjoy!

# Author's Note

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Thank you all for coming along on this ride with me. I can't say how much I appreciate all the support and comments and kudos and all of it. As you may have noticed, this used to be a chapter, but is now just an author's note. When I did my final edit of the entire story, it ended up with one less chapter, so here is the spot that chapter used to be. The comments and notes I've decided to leave here.

Thank you again, and please enjoy the "shorts" after this chapter. They were ideas I had for this story that didn't end up fitting into the timeline, but I thought were cute or needed.

Chapter End Notes

The end. :D

As always, love you all. Stay tuned for some ‘shorts’ that show some scenes I wanted to write but didn’t fit within the confines of this story.

—

Want to see what’s coming up next? Join my discord! https://discord.gg/6vfCJQ88et

# Shorts - Stragglers

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Let me go, you bastards!” Bakugo screamed at his classmates as they landed unsteadily in an alleyway not far from the decimated Kamino ward. The blond struggled against Kirishima, who tried to calm him down to no avail.

“Come on, man! We gotta get the hell out of here!” Kirishima hardened the fists holding onto Bakugo’s flailing arms, struggling to contain the enraged teen. He looked at the other two, Todoroki and Yaoyarozu. “Help me!”

Todoroki begrudgingly took hold of Bakugo as well while the black-haired girl kept watch. Their disguises were halfway torn off. The glasses, fake mustaches, and loose clothing all nearly ripped to shreds by the force of their flight across Kamino Ward.

“I was just getting Deku out of there, idiots. Let me go! I’m gonna punch that villain’s stupid face in!”

Kirishima and Todoroki pulled the raging teen back step-by-step, both glancing at each other in exasperation. Yaoyarozu appeared frozen in place as they slowly pulled their classmate to safety. She watched the way they came, her eyes wide and twitching her head at the slightest sound.

“Do you think anyone is following us?” She mumbled, her exposed arms shaking.

“Why,” Kirishima grunted, heaving against Bakugo’s struggling form. “Why would they?”

“All Might is the bigger threat,” Todoroki agreed, his tone calm and measured, despite the situation.

Yaoyarozu nodded, her frightened eyes turning back to her classmates. “Y-you’re right. Let’s go.” She quickly made a flashlight and took the lead as the four students made their way out of the ruined district.

“Let me GO!” A series of pops and crackles followed the statement, but Kirishma and Todoroki quelled those rather quickly with their

quirks. Ice covered one arm while Kirishima's hardened hands covered the other.

"Dude! Shut up! We gotta be quiet so no one hears us!"

"You're irritating me, Bakugo."

"Be quiet!" Yaoyarozu whispered. She stood frozen at the mouth of the alleyway, her dark eyes looking at something around the corner from the trio.

"Yeah, listen to Momo—"

"SHH!" Yaoyarozu hushed them with more urgency, her eyes wide with fear. She crouched behind a dumpster, watching the same spot as before. Sensing her sudden urgency, her classmates, including Bakugo, instantly stopped talking. They creeped quietly up to where she hid.

Momo pointed silently into the dark, her flashlight long turned off in favor of stealth. A small figure walked tipsily down the street. A larger figure followed not far behind, seeming to keep to the shadows. As they watched, the smaller person passed under a dim streetlamp, revealing a head of spiky brown hair, a red hat, and a familiar, dazed face.

"Is that…?" Kirishima mumbled.

"Kota," Momo confirmed, horrified.

The red-haired teen asked, "But what's he doing—?"

The larger figure behind the child passed under the same streetlamp. An ochre cloak, tophat, and mask were instantly visible over the magician's outfit. In one gloved hand, metal glinted sinisterly in the dim light.

Bakugo, first to recognize him and first to act, leapt from their hiding place with a blast from the hand Kirishima was no longer holding. "YOU BASTARD!" He screamed, body flying in with a series of pops that grew louder with each one. The villain was instantly on guard, dashing to the side to avoid the frontal attack and dodging when a torrent of ice flew at him from behind the dumpster.

Kirishima also ran forward, moving to intercept the villain, who looked ready to flee, while Momo snatched up the crying child and ran him to safety.

“You won’t get away this time,” Todoroki said as the three UA students faced the cornered villain. His tone was as icy as the frost covering his arm, betraying the anger simmering inside.

“On the contrary,” the magician replied, his voice light and unconcerned. “I’ll be escaping quite soon. And with young Bakugo in tow yet again, I imagine.”

“DIE!” Bakugo yelled, bursting forward with his quirk and using the force to free his other hand from the ice encasing it. Blast after blast erupted from his palms, a plume of explosions that didn’t have time to disappear into smoke before another took its place. Kirishima also engaged, going to take the villain in close combat while Todoroki stayed back to ensure the man couldn’t escape.

Mr. Compress dodged nimbly, throwing out chunks of ice from Todoroki’s first volley as shields against the high impact assault. He danced through the flames and punches with ease, though he could tell he was completely outnumbered. The attack was relentless. Every dodged fist from Kirishima led to an awkward leap from building to building to avoid Bakugo’s explosions. And then he was perfect target practice for Todoroki on the ground. He was tiring. Quickly. His bluff very much exposed at this point, he cut his losses.

“Very well, young gentlemen! I bid you adieu! Enjoy your prize.” A hail of marbles that exploded into ice shards rained down on the UA students, causing them to protect their faces as Mr. Compress leapt across the rooftops to the safety of darkness.

Bakugo growled, palms firing up to burst off after the villain, but Momo called out. “Bakugo! Don’t even think about it!”

The blond turned, red eyes filled with anger, and barked, “Who the hell do you think you are, ordering me around? Hah? I do what I want!”

Kirishima chimed in, “No. She’s right, man!”

“Kota needs a hospital,” Momo explained as she made a blanket to wrap around the shivering and sobbing boy. “And we aren’t licensed heroes yet. We can’t go chasing off after villains without breaking the law. If Aizawa knew what we already did tonight, he’d probably have us expelled!”

Bakugo huffed, staring at his three classmates. He scoffed, then muttered, “Let go of me, shitty hair.” Kirishima slowly released the

bombastic blond, who folded his arms over his chest angrily. “Lead the way, ponytail.”

The three relaxed when it was clear Bakugo wasn’t going to explode anymore. Yaoyarozu lifted Kota as she stood, pulling out her flashlight again. “I think there’s a hospital not far from here, but we’ll have to walk. All the ambulances are helping the heroes.”

“I know where it is,” Todoroki offered, taking the flashlight and turning west along another empty street. The trio hurried after him, the sounds of battle still loud in their ears from the ruined ward behind them.

Chapter End Notes

> Welcome to the first short story for Left Over. Here we get the answer to something people have been asking me a lot: Is Kota still alive?!?!?!? Well, the answer is: I would never hurt that precious boy.
>
> Hope you enjoy!
> --
> Want to chat about fanfics and MHA/BNHA with people like you? Come join the discord! We also have pet pictures, which are super cute!
> https://discord.gg/c2gTtJUGy9

# Shorts - Haircut

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku sighed as he brushed strands of his hair out of his eyes for the fifth time in the last two minutes. The curls stubbornly refused to stay behind his ear, but were too long to stay out of his eyes. He tucked them under one hand, holding it solidly to his head while he continued writing his essay for Art History. Beside him, Tofu meowed languidly on her cat bed. There was spot for her to sleep in almost every room now, thanks to Izuku and Shouta's efforts. Hizashi rolled his eyes everytime they came home from the grocery store with a new cushion, but Tofu clearly appreciated it.

Another curl dropped in front of his face, causing him to wince as it hit his eye. He glared at it, willing the hair to stay out of his way for just a few more minutes. When it didn't move, Izuku huffed again. He pushed away from the large desk in his room, causing some of the less-than-stable hero merch to wobble on the shelves. Tofu eyed him lazily as he walked into the hall, barely flicking her tail as his sock-covered feet padded against the wooden floor.

In the kitchen, Hizashi hummed a song to himself as he chopped vegetables, his hair up in its usual loose bun. He caught sight of Izuku as he entered the kitchen, giving a bright smile and a quick, "Hey kiddo!"

Izuku leaned up against the counter, watching Hizashi handling the kitchen knife with ease and trying to work up his nerves. He was officially adopted by Shouta nearly a month ago, but he still had some reservations about asking for things from his guardians. *Parents* , he reminded himself.

"Um…Hizashi?"

"Yep?" The yellow green eyes watched him encouragingly from behind his red-framed glasses.

"M-my hair keeps getting in my face. Can I borrow a hair tie?" Izuku's feet shuffled nervously behind the counter blocking Hizashi's view. He hoped the man couldn't hear his socks against the floor. Both Hizashi and Shouta seemed intimately aware of his nervous ticks and could

pick them out from a mile away.

“Sure! You know where they are?”

Izuku shook his head in the negative, following Hizashi as the blond led the way to the master bathroom. He still felt awkward entering their bedroom. It was their private space, and Izuku didn’t like intruding. Hizashi never seemed to mind though. The pro hero crouched down to look under the sink, pulling out a few elastic hair ties. “I keep a bunch under here. You can keep those.” He handed the bundle to Izuku as he stood, a smile still bright on his face.

Izuku thanked him, testing the elasticity of one of the ties as he and Hizashi walked out of the bedroom and into the living room again. The radio host returned to his vegetables, asking, “How’s the homework going?”

“I’m almost done,” Izuku replied, trying to pull his curls into a semblance of a ponytail and failing as he stood in the living room. “I just have to finish my essay for Art History.” His fingers tangled quickly, and he felt a painful tugging at his hair from the elastic.

Hizashi’s humor-filled eyes watched him struggle for just a moment before he offered assistance, which Izuku gladly took. Thin fingers detangled the mess of curls on top of Izuku’s head with ease, coming through the locks quickly before pulling the hair into a quick top bun. Not all of the green strands were long enough to fit into the bun, but his vision was clear now.

Playing with Izuku’s hair, Hizashi said, “It’s getting pretty long. Wanna grow it out or cut it?” His fingers pulled some of the curls out straight as he spoke, checking the length.

“I-it looks girly when it’s long,” Izuku admitted, a slight flush to his cheeks as he remembered the failed hair experiment in elementary school. Kaachan called him Izuki-chan and asked why he wasn’t wearing the girls’ uniform. Izuku cut his hair very soon afterward.

“If you’re brave and will let me experiment, I can cut it for you. Shou usually has me cut his, but I’ve never done curls though,” Hizashi laughed, letting go of the stretched-out hairs and watching them bounce back into place.

“Um, sure,” Izuku agreed, reaching up to touch the solid bun on top of his head. “Right now?”

“Let me get this soup boiling, then we can try it out.” Hizashi moved back to the vegetables, washing his hands and starting to hum his song again.

“Okay!” Izuku trod back to his room, sitting down to finish his essay now that his hair wasn’t bothering him. Not long after, he shuffled his papers together and stapled them, the loud noise waking Tofu from her slumber. She stretched, then took off into the kitchen where Izuku heard Hizashi filling her food bowl.

“Ready, Izu?” Hizashi called. Izuku smiled at the nickname, feeling warmth blooming in his chest. It was the man’s special name for him. Only Hizashi called him ‘Izu.’ Well, except for Kota, who called him ‘Izu-chan.’ Both made him smile like a fool when he heard them.

“Yep!” Izuku replied, standing and moving into the hallway as he tried to pull his hair out of the bun. Hizashi stood by the whiteboard, marking Tofu’s dinner as ‘served.’ In his hand, he held a pair of silver barber’s shears and a brush.

“Grab that stool from the pantry?”

Izuku did so, following Hizashi back down the hall to his bathroom. Tofu’s tail briefly flicked as he passed, the soft fur brushing his leg. He bit his lip with nervousness and a small amount of excitement. Whenever his mom cut his hair, it was generally a miserable affair involving some amount of accidental hair pulling and his curls looking uneven at the end. He hoped Hizashi, who took very good care of his and Shouta’s hair, would be able to make it look nice. At least he knew the man wouldn’t force him to go to school with a terrible haircut if it didn’t work out.

Hizashi sat him down on the stool right in front of the mirror, then took out the elastic band holding his hair up. He apologized whenever he saw Izuku wince as his hair was pulled. “Let’s see here, listener.” He muttered as he combed through the green curls. “Do you usually cut it dry?” He asked, green eyes meeting Izuku’s in the mirror. The teen nodded, watching as the man brushed his hair out and gauged the length. Hizashi pulled it up and back using his fingers like a straightening iron.

Hizashi paused, a cheeky grin crossing his face. He met Izuku’s eyes in the mirror again. “I have a stupid idea.”

—

Shouta tiredly exited the elevator and slumped down the walkway toward the wooden door that promised peace, quiet, and the comforts of home. And a cat to cuddle. He nodded to his neighbor as they passed, then let his eyes droop again as he pulled out his keys. He was so exhausted. Teaching for half a day and making papers for the rest shouldn't be this draining. He made a note to thank Midnight for taking his class this afternoon so he could nap for at least a few minutes before grading everyone's midterms.

His keyring jangled as he inserted one into the lock and turned it. From behind the door, Shouta heard something. It was loud. Was it… crying? Laughter? Hard to tell. A deep frown on his face as Shouta realized he would have to deal with whatever it was before he could sleep, he pushed open the door to his, Hizashi's, and Izuku's home.

Laughter. It was definitely laughter. Gut clenching, raucous laughter from the second bathroom. Shouta's frown deepened at the loud sound. Choosing to at least get comfortable before confronting his husband and son about whatever it was that was so hilarious, he shucked his boots and hung the gray capture weapon next to his hoodie.

From the bathroom, he heard, "Is that Shou? One sec!" A blond head peeked out from the bathroom door, humor written across his face as tears gathered at the corners of his yellow-green eyes. "Shou! Haha! Shou, grab my leather jacket! Quick!"

Shouta raised a dark eyebrow but did as asked. He could feel the headache he'd been fighting all day making its reappearance. He needed food. And sleep. And painkillers.

Walking slowly, Shouta rounded the corner to look into the bathroom. Izuku sat on the spare stool they kept in the pantry, doubled over with laughter. His higher-pitched giggles floated over the deep guffaws from Hizashi. Shouta stood stunned. Instead of the mop of curls he expected on Izuku's head, a pristine spike of green hair shot back and upward. A green-haired Present Mic. Complete with yellow-tinted glasses. Hizashi stumbled over to Shouta, grabbing the leather jacket from him and struggling to wrap it around Izuku as they both laughed.

"He-here you go! Hahahaha! Izu, put it-HA! Put it on!"

Izuku continued giggling, unable to put both arms through the sleeves as he struggled to calm himself. Tears of glee covered his freckled

cheeks, and he heaved with each new wave of hilarity. Together, Hizashi and Izuku managed to get the oversized jacket on correctly. Hizashi quickly pulled out his phone, still hunched over with laughter as he started recording a video.

“Finger guns! Finger guns!”

Izuku made the iconic Present Mic pose, then coughed out a giggle-filled “Y-YEAH!” Both nearly fell over in fits of mirth as Shouta looked on. A small smile twitched at his lips that he couldn’t contain as it grew into a low chuckle.

Watching Izuku doubled over with laughter in his husband’s get-up instantly made Shouta’s headache disappear. Shaking his head, Shouta chuckled, “What the hell did you do to our son?” His family simply cackled louder.

Chapter End Notes

> This has been living in my head rent-free for months now. Please enjoy the silly-ness like I have.
>
> Come join our discord! We're perfectly normal, I assure you! https://discord.gg/c2gTtJUGy9

# Shorts - Grandma

Chapter Notes

Notes on Japanese words.
Obasan - grandmother (more formal/polite)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shouta glanced through the pantry, dark eyes longing for a particular snack and not finding it. He sighed, wondering if it was worth visiting the grocery store or just settling for his usual jelly pouch. He glanced at the time shining out in bright blue letters from the microwave. 17:47. He frowned. Dinner time. Shouta shut the pantry door. He should at least *try* to set a good example for his new son. It *was* only a few days ago that they got confirmation the official adoption paperwork was filed with the precinct. Nearly a month after they submitted it, but Shouta didn't have much faith in the bureaucracy of government paperwork.

As he pulled out the various pieces of last night's leftovers from the fridge, Shouta glanced over at the kitchen table. It was completely covered in papers, books, and scattered notebooks. Every inch of the wooden table seemed plastered with brightly colored paper, Izuku's tidy scrawl across the various assignments and lined note paper. The teen in question sat hunched over an assignment, pen scribbling rapidly across the page as Izuku mouthed his responses to himself. Green eyes stared intently at the page, rapidly flicking between what he was writing and his textbook off to the side.

Shouta prepped a bowl of rice for himself and Izuku, topping both with vegetables, meat, and sauce before sliding Izuku's bowl into the microwave. Four beeps later, the light inside the oven was on and a soft hum filled the kitchen. As he waited, Shouta filled Tofu's food bowl as well, marking a checkmark under 'cat dinner' on their whiteboard. The microwave dinged to signal its completion, and the tired man quickly swapped the bowls. Carefully laying Izuku's chopsticks across the top of the bowl, he set Izuku's dinner next to the teen on top of a paper that didn't seem important. At least, he didn't recognize it as one he passed out himself.

Izuku glanced up at him as he delivered the dinner, thanking him with a bright smile and moving to take a bite between paragraphs. Shouta hummed a tired 'mmhmm' as he returned to the kitchen to pull out his

own chopsticks. He leaned against the counter, waiting for the microwave to finish. His eyes drifted around the kitchen, not really focussing on anything in particular. The cabinets were the same as they always were; the dishes in the sink were starting to pile up, but Shouta couldn't bring himself to clean them tonight; the whiteboard had a note on it from Hizashi saying, 'Shou, don't forget to call—'

His thigh vibrated as the silenced phone in his pocket started ringing. He pulled it up. The caller ID read 'Mother.' Glancing over at Izuku to make sure he didn't disturb the teen's concentration, Shouta quietly accepted the call and held his phone up to his ear.

Before he could even say a greeting, his mother's voice filled the line. "Shouta."

The dark-haired man closed his eyes, preparing himself. This wasn't her typical 'I just want to catch up' tone of voice.

"Mother." He replied, his voice mirroring hers.

"Would my son like to explain to me why I had to find out from *Nemuri* of all people that I now have a grandson?"

Shouta sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose with his free hand as he considered just how much trouble he was in. He cursed the fact that Nemuri frequently spoke with his mother through Nemuri's aunt. At this point, he would save himself a lot of trouble if he simply didn't tell Nemuri anything important anymore.

Knowing any answer he gave wouldn't get him out of trouble, Shouta opened the microwave and pulled out his dinner. As he mixed everything together, he asked, "Can I send you a picture first, or did Nemuri spoil that surprise too?"

"Shouta!" His mother exclaimed in her hoarse voice, excitement rising. "Send me the picture, and we'll discuss if you're forgiven or not."

Rolling his eyes with amusement, Shouta quickly pulled his phone around. "Izuku," he called, opening his camera as the teen looked up, green eyes curious. The tired man snapped a picture before Izuku registered what was going on. The innocent face of his adopted son watched him with surprise. It was usually Hizashi that snuck in pictures at every opportunity.

Sending the file quickly and returning the phone to his ear, Shouta

winked at Izuku before saying, “I just sent it.”

Izuku, eyebrows still raised in question, tentatively signed, ‘Who is that?’ He pointed to the phone in Shouta’s hand, his homework forgotten in the face of a new curiosity.

Shouta held his phone away from his ear as the Aizawa matriarch let out an uncharacteristic sound of delight. She loudly proclaimed that the small family needed to visit immediately as the dark-haired man locked eyes with Izuku. The teen watched the phone with shock as the small speaker crackled. Amused, Shouta replied. “My mother.”

Understanding dawned on Izuku’s face, a small smile that he fought to contain pulling at his lips as Shouta slowly, carefully brought the phone back to his ear.

“You and Hizashi will bring him over this weekend! Your father and I will clean up your old room so my grandson can sleep there. He needs a more comfortable place to sleep than the living room. You and Hizashi will take the couch bed. What does my grandson like to do? I need ideas for gifts, Shouta. I’m *behind* thanks to your forgetfulness. Not telling me about my perfect grandson so I can *dote* on him. Honestly! When is his birthday? If I’ve missed it, *you* will be sleeping on the floor and Hizashi will have the couch bed to himself.”

“Mother.” Shouta tried to interrupt as he became increasingly alarmed at the level of detail the Aizawa matriarch was planning into this imaginary trip.

“How old is he, anyway? He looks about fourteen. Has he applied to high schools yet? You better get a good word in for my grandson at U.A. I won’t allow you to send him to a lesser school, Shouta. It simply won’t do.”

“ *Mother* ,” he tried again. When his interruption was ignored, he simply sighed, resigning himself to the tirade of questions and scoldings. His stomach rumbled and he watched the steam rising from his microwaved dinner. He sighed, turning to watch Izuku sliding his completed homework into his backpack. An idea struck him.

Shouta pulled his phone away from his ear, covered the speaker, and whispered with hushed urgency. “Izuku.” Green eyes locked with his. The obnoxious yellow All Might backpack that matched the color of Shouta’s favorite sleeping bag closed with a quick zip. Shouta motioned for the teen to come closer, pulling the device away from his ear to put it on speakerphone and hastily thumb down the volume.

Aizawa Etsuko's voice continued her one-sided conversation as Shouta leaned over the counter conspiratorially. "Talk with your grandmother so I can eat dinner."

Green eyes watched him lean back with trepidation and surprise. His bottom lip immediately went between his teeth, causing Shouta to frown and tap his own mouth with a shake of his head. Izuku let the offending lip free, but his teeth seemed ready to capture it again at a moment's notice. "A-are you s-sure? I-I mean, I've n-never met y-your parents and w-wouldn't she th-think it's rude for me t-to just start t-talking to her? I j-just—"

Shouta reached over and tapped the mute button on his screen. Dark eyes fixed gently on Izuku, he explained, "This woman is currently planning on forcing me to drive us six hours to Toyama City to stay for the weekend so she can meet you. She already told my father to clean up my old room so you can sleep in it. Mind you, she means *this weekend* . It's Saturday." Shouta waited to let that sink in, then playfully ruffled Izuku's mop of green curls. "Talk to her. She'll love it."

The teen seemed bolstered by his words, a faint smile pulling at his lips. He carefully pulled Shouta's phone closer, his hand hovering over the mute button as the woman on the other side of the line continued her rapid fire questions. Just before he tapped the screen, green eyes caught Shouta's with a cheeky grin.

"I'm j-just a distraction so you don't get in t-trouble, aren't I?"

"Absolutely," Shouta deadpanned, picking up his bowl to finally eat. "Go." He gestured with his chopsticks at the phone. "Distract."

Izuku watched him for a few more moments, a gleam to his bright eyes. Shouta knew that look. The teen had some sort of plan forming behind that innocent face. The pro hero frowned, watching his new son as the Cheshire grin grew.

"Only if we get ramen from Taneki-san's shop next time 'Zashi is working."

Shouta looked between the phone, which still spewed a near constant stream of consciousness from his mother, and the innocently wide green eyes watching him from across the counter. His chest warmed knowing Izuku felt comfortable enough to tease him. The teen was a far cry more confident than when he first came to live with them nearly three months ago. Now here he was blackmailing Shouta and

feeling like a permanent fixture. It was strange, Shouta thought. How quickly loneliness set in when his Problem Child wasn't around the house.

A small smirk crossed Shouta's lips. He grunted, "Deal," before turning to take a bite of his rice.

Izuku's smile burst into a beam of pure sunlight as he snatched up Shouta's phone and turned off the mute button.

"...Shouta are you even listening? How am I supposed to be a good grandmother if you won't even tell me my grandson's name? Hmm? You and your father's damned quietness. It's a wonder I get anything out of either of you."

"S-Shouta is eating dinner right now, Obasan." Izuku stated, leaning against the kitchen counter and watching the pro hero to make sure he wasn't crossing a line. The man nodded in encouragement. "My n-name is Izuku, though."

The resulting squeal was so loud it caused the speaker to cut out.

Chapter End Notes

> Welcome to another short! It's cute! It's fluffy! It's a balm for the soul after all the tragedy I put you all through to get here haha. Hope you like it!
>
> I'm happy to say I'm almost done with my rewrite of Left Over. It mostly focusses on the first few chapters (because they were the most poorly written) and the last few chapters (because I missed a few loose ends). Hopefully if you ever decide to re-read it, it will flow much better and be a more enjoyable read.
>
> Thanks to all of you out there reading this story! You guys are awesome and keep me writing more. :)
>
> --
>
> Want to hang out with people who like MHA/BNHA and fanfiction? Come join my discord server! https://discord.gg/c2gTtJUGy9

# Shorts - Ache

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku slowly let out the breath he was holding as he tried to find a comfortable spot to rest his arms. His body lay sprawled over the couch as he shifted bit-by-bit to find the most relaxed position. He paused between each movement, waiting with baited breath to see if he finally found the golden spot. The ache in his arms remained. He sighed, shifting again as he stared blankly at the ceiling. Tofu watched him curiously from her perch by the balcony door, her brown eyes watching him unblinkingly.

The teen shifted his hips to find a new set of positions to try, but nothing seemed to help. His arms throbbed achingly with each breath he took, and the deep frown between his eyebrows continued to deepen as his discomfort rose. He wished, not for the first time, that his past self was more careful with his quirk. Breaking his bones so many times, especially the incredibly bad break from his Practical Exam, left him with a near constant, bone-deep soreness in his arms. Today was simply a bad day. Maybe it was the rainy weather?

Sighing and shifting to no avail, Izuku finally gave up trying to be comfortable and sat up on the sofa. He knew Shouta and ‘Zashi had pain killers somewhere in the house, but Izuku was fairly sure they were in the master bathroom. Though they both said he was allowed to go in there, the teen still felt uncomfortable intruding on their private spaces. So, he resigned himself to aching arms until they got home from the after-school meeting Nedzu required them for.

Wanting the maximum comfort he could achieve without medication, Izuku pulled his treasured All Might blanket off his bed and wrapped himself up in it like a sushi roll. Then, he planted himself back on the couch and turned on the hero news network, hoping to keep his mind occupied while he waited. The pressure from the blanket helped to ease the aching in his arms just a little bit, and Izuku felt himself relax against the cushions as the balcony door was pelted with rain. He hoped the two heroes wouldn’t have trouble getting home in the storm. The rain was coming down hard, and the news was showing a villain attack downtown, causing massive traffic buildups.

An hour passed, the storm only intensifying as lightning started

flashing outside. Izuku tried not to let his nervousness get the better of him as he wondered when Hizashi and Shouta would be home. He filled Tofu's bowl with her dry pebble food and marked her dinner off on the whiteboard by the fridge. He stood silently against the wall for several minutes, trying to breathe through the pain in his limbs.

Izuku bit his lip and looked around the dark kitchen. Neither of his guardians were back yet, and though he was trying hard not to let panic set in, he was getting worried. He immediately started his breathing exercises like Shouta taught him. In and out, in and out. Even months after Shouta adopted him officially, Izuku still couldn't stay calm. He shook his head. *Intrusive thoughts* , he reminded himself. *You're fine. There's nothing wrong.*

He was able to calm himself enough to pull out his phone and begin dialing Shouta's number when he heard the door opening and the sound of wet boots against the tile entryway. Izuku quickly flipped the light on in the kitchen, then stepped into view of the front door. Hizashi stood there, shaking his jacket and pushing his drenched yellow hair out of his face. Yellow-green eyes met Izuku's, and an easy smile brightened Hizashi's expression.

"Hey kiddo, sorry I'm late. Shou got called to the precinct, so I ran him over there. You had dinner yet?"

Feeling an instant wave of relief as well as a sharp increase in pain from his tense arms, Izuku shook his head.

Hizashi tisked lightheartedly. "Let's eat then. I'm starving, ya dig?"

Happy to no longer be alone, Izuku helped the blond hero heat up leftovers from the night before. Tofu meowed at her empty food bowl, unhappy that the humans were eating and she didn't have anything, but neither of them bought it, both checking the whiteboard and shaking their heads at the cat. The two sat down at the table, digging into their dinner with gusto as the storm raged outside.

When he finished, Izuku sat back on his cushion, content that the ache in his stomach was at least filled, though his arms were worsening. He sighed, massaging his biceps and forearms as he asked, "D-do we have pain k-killers, 'Zashi?"

The blond looked up from his plate, chopsticks halfway to his mouth. "Sure, kiddo. You need some?"

Izuku nodded. Hizashi stood and walked toward his and Shouta's

bedroom, calling, “Is it your arms again?”

“Y-yeah. I think t-the storm is making it w-worse.”

“Gotcha.” The sound of a cabinet opening and shutting echoed back to Izuku’s ears as he waited patiently at the table. The exuberant blond entered the living room again, setting a white bottle on the table. Izuku immediately opened it and poured out the directed amount into his hand. Once they were down the hatch, he thanked his guardian.

“Of course!” Hizashi said, returning to his plate. He tapped something next to him with a free hand. “I picked these up after last time. They’re supposed to be really good for this sort of thing.”

The teen looked down curiously at the items, seeing something similar to his old compression sleeves. But these were thicker, and had a cord that plugged into the wall. He frowned thinking, “Are these…?”

“They’re a compression sleeve, but they also heat up! That was the harder part when we tried alternating hot and cold last time. You wanna try them?”

Izuku smiled brightly, still stunned that Hizashi and Shouta continued to be so caring of him, even after all the trouble he took them through. The teen put away his dishes, then settled on the couch again, sliding the sleeves into place and connecting them to the wall. He flipped the switch and waited, enjoying the pressure in the meantime as the thick, padded material heated up. Soon, the ache was easing away under the gentle heat, and Izuku finally was able to relax comfortably.

“Th-thanks, ‘Zashi. These are really g-great!”

Hizashi smiled, his eyes twinkling behind his red-framed glasses. “You’re welcome, kiddo.”

Chapter End Notes

Enjoy!

Want to chat with people who like MHA/BNHA and fanfics? Come join the discord server I made! https://discord.gg/c2gTtJUGy9

# Shorts - Cleaning Day

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku rearranged his shelf of notebooks, took a step back to examine them, then rearranged them again.

“Numerical order makes the most sense, but also I could go by the ranking of the heroes within? No, I don’t have them organized like that. Or maybe I could try…?”

He set the last book on the shelf and stood back to examine it yet again. Satisfied for now, he moved onto his closet, hanging shirts and tucking unused shoes into their boxes on the top shelf. It was strange having more than one pair, but Shouta and Hizashi made sure he had a full wardrobe, complete with boots, running shoes, formal shoes, and flip flops. His All Might slippers were gently tucked on his feet.

Outside of his room, he heard the sound of the vacuum running over the carpeted living room, as well as the clink of dishes as they were put away in cupboards. This morning, Hizashi decided the house needed a thorough cleaning, so all three of them were intently tidying the apartment while Tofu looked on with displeasure. Izuku was in charge of cleaning his own room for the most part. He smiled fondly at Shouta’s words to him when he first came to live with the two heroes. “Your responsibility is to get good grades, keep your room clean, and play with the cat.”

Well, let it never be said that Izuku didn’t abide by those words. He dutifully studied his school work and played with Tofu every day. And now, he was tidying his room. In all honesty, it needed a bit of rearranging after Shouta officially adopted him. Before then, his things were simply placed wherever they would fit best, with little care to the placement and flow of the room. Now Izuku could adjust everything to his liking. This was *his* room now, after all.

A knock on his door signaled Shouta’s arrival. He stood in bright pink sweatpants and a black short sleeved shirt. The first time the dark-haired man wore this particular outfit, Izuku was shocked into a near catatonic state, but now it only made him smile internally. Watching the no-nonsense man walk around in bright pink sweats was one of the highlights of living with the heroic pair.

“I’m here for your garbage,” Shouta grunted, holding up a white plastic trash can liner.

Izuku looked around for the small can, not sure where he put it in his rearranging. Spotting it shoved in a corner by his bed, the teen quickly pulled out the bag and handed it to his adopted parent. Shouta quickly stashed it into the larger bag and tied the whole thing closed as he made for the front door, one hand reaching out to ruffle Izuku’s green curls. He did that often, but only when no one else could see. Like a gesture only between the two of them.

“I’m doing the bathrooms next. You might wanna put your toothbrush away before I get there,” Shouta called as he slid his shoes on and exited the apartment.

Izuku’s eyes widened, knowing if Shouta was the one to put his things away, they’d end up in all the wrong places and Izuku would never find his toothbrush again. He dashed into the bathroom, eyes catching Hizashi dancing to his radio as he wound up the cord of the vacuum. Tofu sat perched on the couch looking grumpy at all the noise and hubbub.

Once his things were put away in the bathroom, Izuku hurried back to his own room to put the rest of it back together. He saw Hizashi, sweeping the kitchen, and knew he would be coming down the hall soon. The teen eyed the carefully piled All Might action figures and sized up the remaining space on his desk. If he was precise with each and every figure, there should be enough space to display them all without covering any up. Nodding to himself, he set to work.

Soon, all three inhabitants of the freshly cleaned apartment were lounging tiredly on the couch. The cat purred happily in Shouta’s lap as the house finally quieted down to its usual calm state. The trio were contentedly enjoying a rest after the burst of energetic cleaning.

“Doesn’t this feel a lot better? No more clutter! I feel like I could do anything now, ya dig?”

Shouta hummed, his long fingers gently running through Tofu’s fur as she softly rumbled. Izuku agreed, a smile on his face as he looked around the clean house. He was excited to try out his newly organized desk space. He calculated at least a 20% increase in studying effectiveness, as well as his hero notes. Everything was in reachable distance now, no more standing to grab something from the closet or under his bed. Everything was as it should be.

“Shit!” Hizashi yelled suddenly, causing both of his companions to jump. Izuku and Shouta watched with wide eyes and glared respectively as the blond stood.

“What.” Shouta grunted, a frown between his eyebrows as Tofu leapt away, scared by the sudden noise.

“We gotta do the laundry!” Hizashi wailed as he trudged toward their bedroom, his expression downcast and defeated.

Shouta and Izuku both groaned and stood in response.

Chapter End Notes

> This one has randomly been in my head forever. I don't know why. Probably Shouta's pink sweats.
>
> Come join the discord server if you want to chat with likeminded people! https://discord.gg/c2gTtJUGy9

# Shorts - Contest

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He had enough. He couldn't do it anymore. It was too much to handle. Too hard! But no, he would keep going. He could push through. He had to. He had a goal, and he would stick to it! Plus Ultra!

Plus Ultra didn't seem to mean much as his arms shook underneath him and Shouta's calm, dark eyes watched him with humor.

*Damn it!* Izuku thought, gritting his teeth as he fought to maintain his form. Across from him, the underground hero was barely breaking a sweat as he held the same pose, arms pushing his body off the floor in a pushup position.

Izuku's arms shook violently as he struggled to maintain the strenuous exercise. Three minutes. He'd made it three minutes already. *I can do this! Don't let him win!* The teen focused on his breathing, ignoring the strain in his arms and abs while Shouta watched him. The man wasn't even breathing heavily.

The teen gasped as he tried to ease the strain by leaning his weight from one arm to the other, but it didn't help. He was going to lose, he knew it. Without his quirk, which Shouta was currently negating to make the contest fair, he couldn't outlast the pro hero. *No! Don't think like that! You've got this!*

The front door opened and Hizashi entered the kitchen, looking at something on his phone. When neither of them greeted him, the blond looked up, eyes quickly taking in the sight of them.

"What's going on here, now?" Hizashi asked, moving to stand in front of the TV to watch them both.

"Plank contest." Shouta stated calmly, his voice totally even and not at all strained with the exertion.

"How long you been at it?"

Shou looked down at his phone, which was steadily counting up. His gaze returned to Izuku, the red glow ensuring the teen couldn't fall back on his quirk. "Nearly four minutes."

Hizashi considered for a moment, eyes drifting over their teenage son, red-faced and shaking, then his husband, coolly unconcerned and comfortable. Shouta was incredibly strong. He had to be. Quirkless fighting was much more hard on the body, and required strength and finesse. The blond knew how long the man could hold this position. He timed it himself most weeks when Shou woke up in the middle of the night with too much energy to sleep.

An idea popped into his head as he watched the green bean struggle. “So…” he started, “what’s the wager?”

“If Izuku loses, he has to do the dishes tonight and tomorrow.”

“And if Izuku wins?”

The teen gasped as he strained to stay upright. His muscles ached, screaming at him to release this position as sweat dripped down his forehead. “I still d-do the dishes.” Izuku grunted, staring straight into Shouta’s glowing red eyes as he exerted himself. “But Shouta b-buys us all ice cream afterwards.”

Hizashi raised both eyebrows as he laughed. “What a deal, hah! Shou, you’ve really outdone yourself this time. Well! I’ll help you out, Green Bean!” He strode over and sat primly on Shouta’s back, letting his full weight rest on his husband.

Shouta grunted, adjusting his arms to accommodate the extra weight. Soon, the underground hero’s arms were shaking heavily and a bead of sweat dripped down his chin.

“That’s cheating, Zashi,” Shouta growled as he fought to maintain his quirk and hold himself and the blond up at the same time.

“On what grounds? You never said I couldn’t help! Besides, I want ice cream. Oh!” Hizashi bent down, purposefully trying to unbalance the dark-haired man he was sitting on, and picked up Tofu as she passed by.

Shouta, struggling to stay upright with the additional weight, found himself tipping sideways as Hizashi foiled his careful balance. “Shit!” He hit the ground with a loud thump, the blond sprawled on top of him as Tofu meowed loudly and darted away.

Izuku’s arms gave out under him as he too toppled to the living room floor, panting heavily. He rolled onto his back, letting his arms rest at his sides. They felt like wet noodles.

“Woo! We’re getting ice cream! Rockin’ job, kiddo!”

Shouta pushed Hizashi off of him, glaring with humor-filled eyes at his husband. He shook his head, standing and picking up his phone to stop the timer. “Even with outside interference,” his dark eyes glanced at the blond still sprawled on the floor. He continued, “You still made it to four minutes and twenty seconds. Good job.”

Izuku raised an arm in a pitiful rendition of All Might’s iconic pose. “Plus…Ultra…” He mumbled, already envisioning the ice cream he fought so hard to get.

Chapter End Notes

> Come join the discord server if you want to chat with likeminded people! https://discord.gg/c2gTtJUGy9

# Shorts - Grandfather

Chapter Notes

Japanese words:

Obasan - grandmother
Ojisan - grandfather

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku nervously waited as Hizashi pulled their black car into an unfamiliar driveway. The house they arrived at was an older, traditional home, but it was clearly updated several years back. The garden was well tended, with a small fish pond tucked in a corner. Standing on the porch was an older couple, their black hair streaked with gray, and soft wrinkles creasing the edges of their mouths and foreheads. The man looked calm, his hands held gently behind his back. The woman was craning her head as she tried to see through the dark windows of the car, her hand waving as she called out, “Shouta! Hizashi! Where’s my grandson?”

“Here we are!” Hizashi chuckled, a tired but bright smile lighting up his face as he unbuckled himself and got out of the car. Shouta followed suit, moving to the trunk to pull out their luggage as he greeted his parents.

In the back seat, Izuku sat frozen next to Tofu’s carrier. Though he’d spoken to her every week for the last month now, nervousness overtook him as he realized he would actually be meeting his new grandparent for the very first time. His lip was quickly captured between his teeth as he slowly, very slowly, grabbed his backpack and stepped out of the car.

Shouta caught Izuku’s eye as he shut the trunk. The teen’s apprehensive expression must have been readily apparent, because the dark-haired man quietly muttered, “Why don’t you grab Tofu, then we can go up together?” Izuku nodded, slipping around to the other side of the car to gently pull out Tofu’s carrier. The cat paced inside her box, meowing as she realized they were at the end of their seven-hour journey.

Ahead of them, Hizashi was hugging the older couple. “…drive was good! Shouta slept most of the way, but Izuku and I were able to keep

a good conversation going."

"Speaking of," the hoarse voice of Aizawa Etsuko carried over the small garden as Shouta and Izuku started making their way up the drive. "Shouta." Her near-growl was accompanied by the familiar red glow of Shouta's quirk. Izuku immediately felt unable to move as his body completely froze. Shouta was in a similar state, only he was glaring right back at his mother, his own quirk igniting.

Izuku was able to move again as the dark-haired man asked, "Was that really necessary, mother?"

"You made me wait an entire *month* to meet my grandson, Aizawa Shouta. This is your own fault." The elderly woman huffed, then turned to Izuku, an excited smile on her face as she held out her arms. "Izuku, welcome to our home! Come give your obasan a hug! I've waited so long to finally meet you!

Izuku smiled tentatively, setting down Tofu's crate as he stepped forward into his grandmother's embrace. She was warm, and soft, and welcoming. All his nervousness washed away as he felt love immediately flow over him. He hardly knew either of them, but the eagerness they showed in inviting him into their lives so quickly made his eyes fill with tears almost immediately.

Pulling away from the hug, Izuku wiped his tears and smiled brightly, all sunshine and excitement. Beside him, his grandfather patted him gently on the back. From Shouta's descriptions, the man was generally quiet and mild-mannered. His quirk, which calmed emotions, tended to make him quite serene. It was also where Shouta's quirk-activated floating hair came from.

Etsuko showed Izuku and Hizashi into the house as her husband, Aizawa Hiroto, helped Shouta bring the luggage in. Both men spoke quietly to one another, small chuckles coming from both of them as they watched Etsuko introduce Izuku to their home.

"How have you been, Shouta?" The elder Aizawa asked as they settled the various bags in their sitting room and opened the door to Tofu's carrier. The cat immediately leapt out, stretching and claiming a spot on the couch for her own.

"Good. Work is the same as usual. Busy." Shouta cracked his neck, following his mother, husband, and son out onto the back porch as they continued the tour of the Aizawa home.

Hiroto followed, dark brown eyes watching his wife interact with their grandson with fondness. “And how is fatherhood suiting you?”

Shouta snorted, “It doesn’t feel like fatherhood. At least,” he paused, thinking. “It hasn’t been as difficult as I thought it would be. Our lives are completely changed around now, but it feels…right.”

The older man smiled, the wrinkles around his eyes deepening with affection. “No? Seems like you were meant to be a father then.”

Shouta shook his head as they both watched the green-haired teen examining the fish pond. “I wouldn’t say that.” Silence flowed between them, not awkward in any sense, but a comfortable silence. Shouta thought for a moment, then said, “Maybe not meant to be a father. But meant to be there. For *him* .”

Hiroto’s arm landed on his son’s shoulders, and his large hand squeezed gently. “That’s what being a father means, Shouta. I’m happy for you. For all of you.”

Shouta just nodded, not knowing what else to say but the truth. “Me too.”

Chapter End Notes

Y 'all asked for more grandparents, and while I had the intention of writing the whole trip, I realized it was more fun to just have snapshots.

Hey look a discord link! https://discord.gg/c2gTtJUGy9

# Shorts - Otosan

Chapter Notes

Japanese words:

Obasan - grandmother
Ojisan - grandfather
Otosan - father, dad

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shouta watched the painted road lines pass by rapidly as he sped the car along the highway back to Musutafu District. The weekend spent at his parents was short, but full. His mother insisted on showing Izuku everything there was to see about Toyama City. The underground hero was 90% certain it was a ploy to get Izuku to stay, or at least make him want to come back as soon as possible. He supposed he should have let them know they would be visiting for winter break. Shit. Well, Izuku could tell her next time they spoke on the phone.

Hizashi snored heavily beside him, his hearing aids long taken out in favor of sleeping for most of the long drive home. In the back seat, Izuku was similarly asleep, his head leaned against the window with his jacket bunched up like a pillow. Shouta's usual insomnia kicked in about two hours into the drive.

It was late. They tried to stay as long as possible at his parent's home, so the latter half of their drive was in darkness. Now, an hour out from their home, Shouta was looking forward to his own bed. And take-out. How late was Red Monkey Sushi open? He couldn't remember.

In the backseat, Izuku pulled in a deep breath as he woke into consciousness, his bleary eyes looking around the dark car. The kid groaned, rubbing his eyes as he searched for his water bottle on the floor. Finally locating it, he took a swig, only to realize there was barely a mouthful in the bottle.

Shouta kept his eyes on the road as Izuku rustled around in the back. The rustling stopped as the teen leaned forward, his head by Shouta's shoulder.

Quietly, in a sleepy voice, he asked, "Can I borrow your water?"

Shouta hummed an affirmative, reaching down to grab his bottle and pass it backwards to his kid. Izuku muttered a muted “Thanks” before taking several large gulps. He slid the bottle back into the cupholder in the front seat, the thin plastic crinkling as it rubbed against the harder material.

Several quiet moments passed as Shouta maneuvered around a much slower vehicle, then returned to the travel lane. The music was quiet, barely audible over the road noise. Beside him, Shouta heard Hizashi’s continued snoring. The man could sleep through anything, something Shouta was incredibly jealous of. But for now, the underground hero just enjoyed the quiet and the dark. Most of the time he was working at this time of night. It was nice to let go of that responsibility for a few days.

“I really like obasan and ojisan.” Izuku murmured, his eyes staring out the window at the passing trees.

“Yeah?” Shouta grunted. “I know obasan was very happy to meet you. Ojisan as well.”

Izuku nodded quietly. “Ojisan is a lot like you. And his hair floats like yours when he uses his quirk. Did you know?”

Shouta smiled to himself. He could tell Izuku was still incredibly tired, but quirk theory was never far from his mind.

“I did. When I got my quirk, we all thought I got his because of the hair. But then my eyes glowed like my mother’s.”

“Did you know obasan’s quirk is called Death Glare? I think that’s r-really funny.” Izuku giggled in the backseat, his head cushioned against the window by his jacket again. “Do you think she named it herself?”

Shouta snorted at the tired teen. He liked it when Izuku was relaxed like this. He forgot to be anxious, and the stutter was almost non-existent. “No,” Shouta replied. “Ojisan named it after they got married.”

“Really? That’s funny.” Izuku giggled again as his eyes fluttered closed, the gentle humming of the engine slowly lulling him back to sleep.

Shouta waited for his kid to say something else, fully expecting some sort of mutter storm or further laughter. It was these quiet moments

that he adored. Izuku, as comfortable as could be, happy, and not worried about a thing. This was what he wanted every day for Izuku to be like.

“Izuku?” Shouta called quietly, feeling a pressure in his chest and a lump in his throat.

“Hmm?”

“You still awake?”

“Yeah…” Izuku shifted, working his jacket into a more comfortable spot.

Shouta swallowed around the thick lump in his throat, then spoke the words he’d been meaning to say all weekend.

“I love you, kid.”

The car was quiet for several moments after he spoke, and Shouta fully expected Izuku was asleep again. But, instead, a warm voice replied.

“I love you too, Otosan.”

Shouta smiled.

Chapter End Notes

The last one. Thanks so much to everyone that joined me on this wild ride. It's been crazy, it's been fun, and it's been crazy fun. :D

If you want to know when I post more works like this, please follow me as an author to see when I post new stories. I have a few lurking about in my mind.

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